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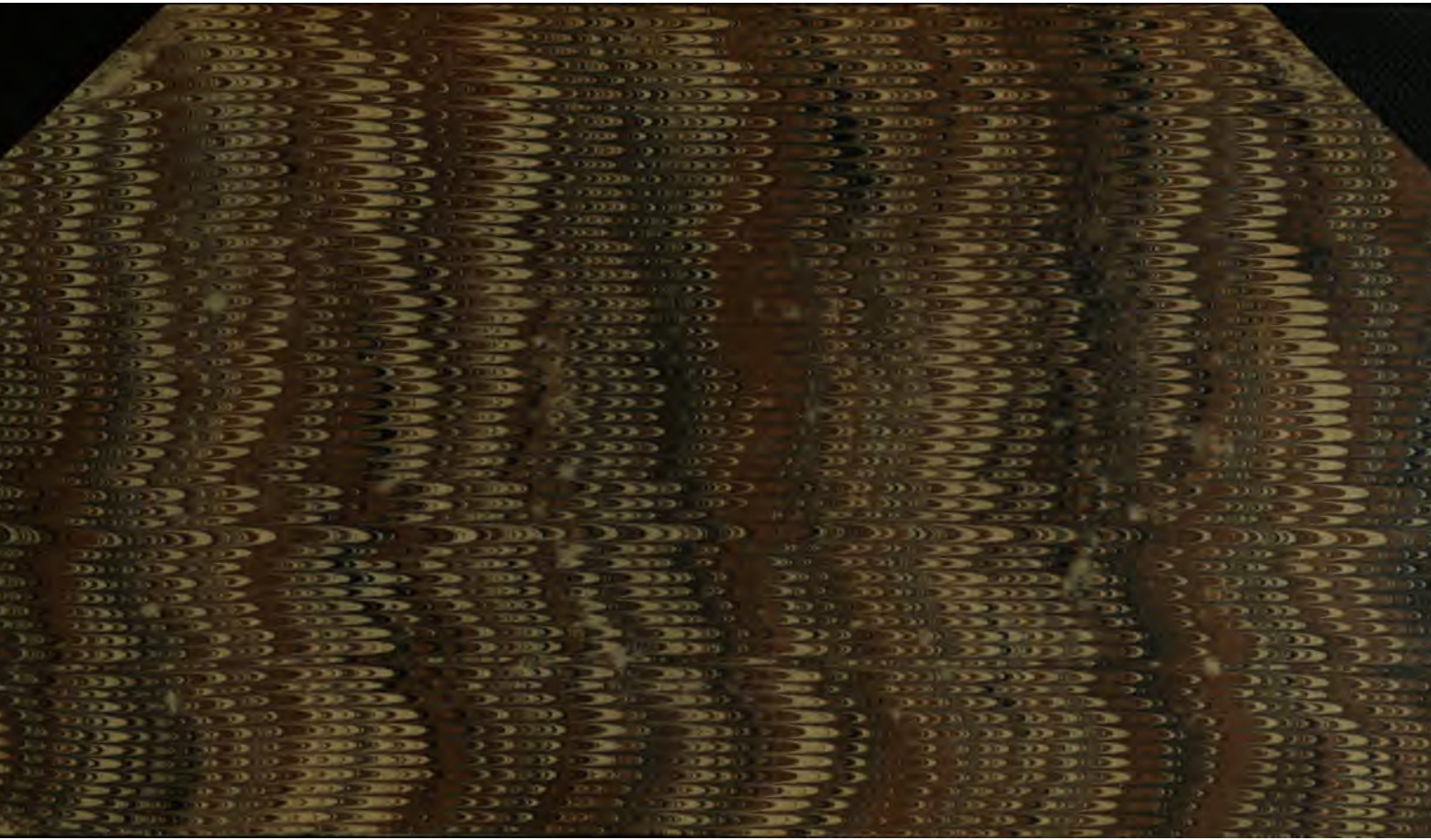

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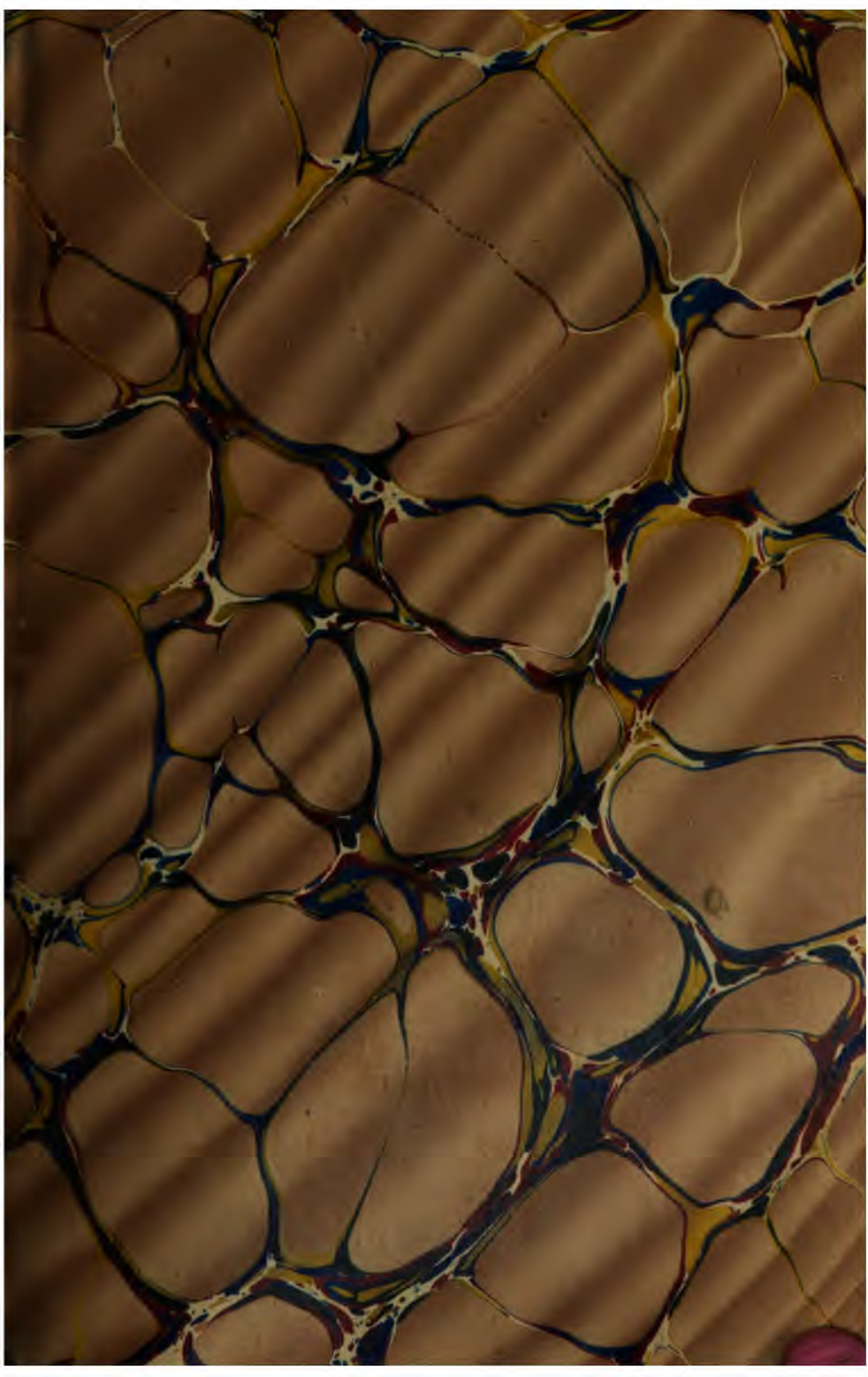

THE

THEOLOGICAL

AND

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

OF THE LATE REV.

JONES, M.A.

F *NAYLAND, SUFFOLK.*

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AM STEVENS, ESQ.

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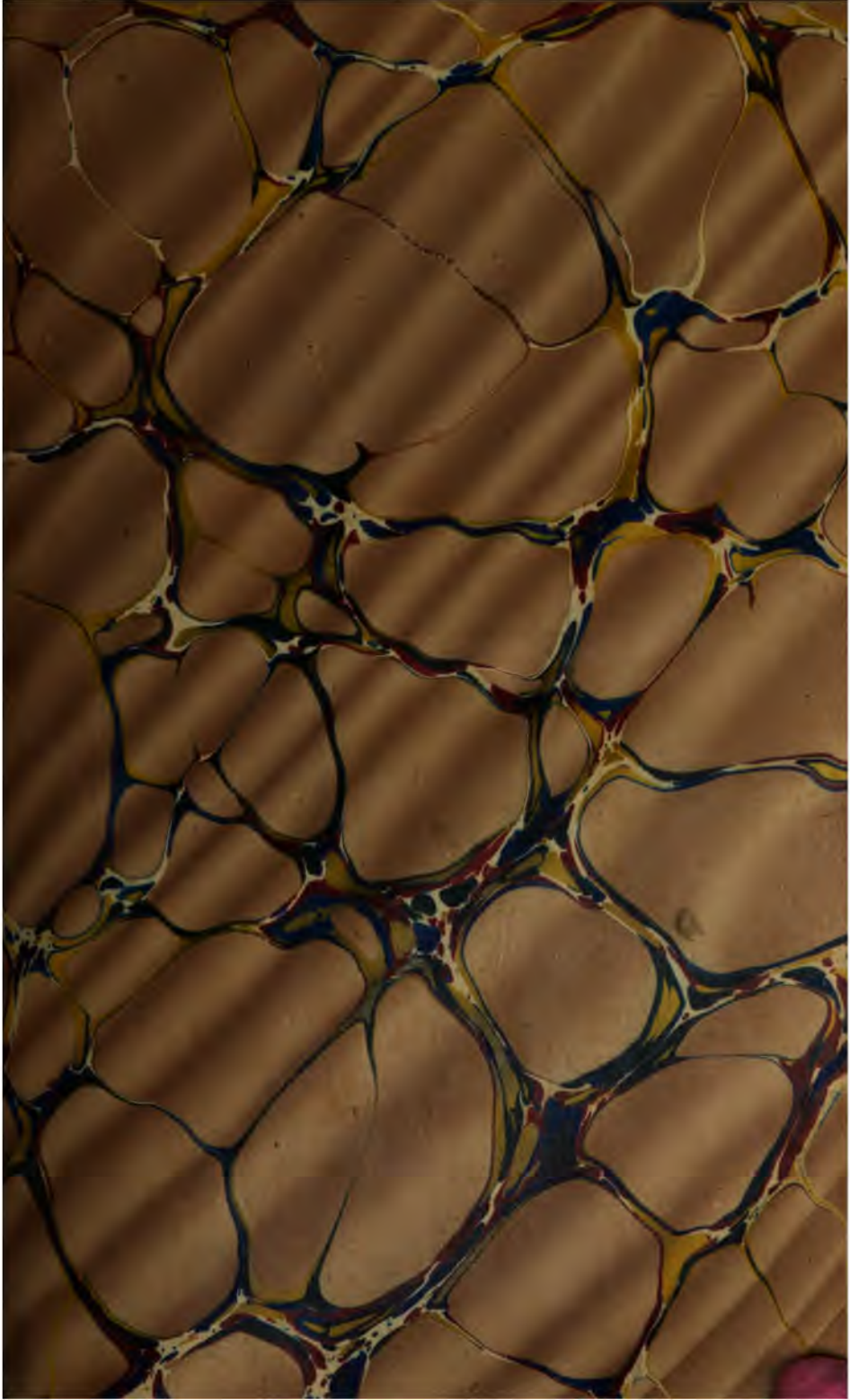

but to those who diligently turn it up and cultivate it; who can imagine that the wisdom of God's word can be discovered at sight by every common reader? Nature must be compared with itself; and the scripture must be compared with itself, by those who would understand either the one or the other.

Every science hath its own elements; it hath a sort of alphabet peculiar to itself; which must be learned in the first place, before any judgment can be formed, or any pleasure received when that science is treated of: for none but fools are enamoured with what they do not understand; and few things can be understood without being first learned. *How can I understand,* said the Ethiopian Eunuch, *unless some man should guide me?* When he looked into the prophet Isaiah, he had a book before him, in which it frequently happens that the thing spoken of is not the thing intended, and he knew not how to distinguish: *of whom speaketh the Prophet this?* said he; *of himself, or of some other man?* Therefore he wanted one to guide him. But the case is so particular, that something more than the guidance of man is necessary; and the royal prophet was sensible of it, when he said, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.*—Even in men of honest minds, well affected to the truth, there was found a slowness of heart, which our blessed Saviour found it necessary to remove by his own immediate grace, before his discourse could be understood: *then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scripture.*

These, and many other like passages, shew, that there is a certain obscurity in the language of the bible, which renders it difficult to be understood; that there is something which common eyes cannot discern: and it may be collected from what happens

to us in every other kind of learning, that there are elements or principles which must be known and allowed before we can understand what the scriptures contain. The case of the Jews demonstrates by a notorious fact, that the matter of the bible may be grossly misapprehended and falsely interpreted. They were zealously affected, after their manner, to Moses and the prophets: they were familiarly acquainted with their writings, and understood the original language in which they were delivered. But still, they had *eyes without seeing*, and *ears without hearing*. The bible was open before them; but their attention or their affection (one of the two it must have been) did not penetrate beyond the surface. And as our Saviour preached to them in the same way as Moses and the prophets had written (of which we shall see more hereafter), they were as much at a loss for the meaning of his discourses, as for the true sense of the law and the prophets. The same defect may be in us at this day, and certainly is in many, although we have the scripture in our mother tongue; a blessing which was denied to us so long as we were under the authority of the church of Rome. If a man hears the bible all his life with a Jewish mind, he will know no more of it at last than the Jews do. The son of Adam will be left as ignorant as the son of Abraham, unless his heart and understanding are opened to admit the principles of the Christian Revelation. It is vain to argue about the super-structure, so long as the foundation is disputed, either through ignorance or disaffection.

This obscurity then in the word of God doth not arise from the language or the grammar; for so far the bible like other books, is the subject of critical industry: and much useful labour hath been employed

by learned and pious men in clearing the letter of the scripture from the ambiguities to which all language is subject. The difficulties under which the Jews laboured were not grammatical difficulties: and whatever these may be in the original, they are removed for all common readers by the translation of the bible into their mother tongue. The great difficulties of the scripture arise totally from other causes and principles; namely, from the *matter* of which it treats, and the various *forms* under which that matter is delivered.

Let us consider first, how the case stands with respect to the *matter* of the scripture; and then secondly, with respect to the form or *manner* in which that matter is represented.

The bible treats of a dispensation of God, which began before this world, and will not be finished till the world is at an end, and the eternal kingdom of God is established. It informs us of the institution of religion in paradise, with the original dependence of man upon his Maker: of a primitive state of man under a former covenant, which is now forfeited: of his temptation and fall: of the causes of death and the promise of redemption. It founds a ritual on the remission of sin by the shedding of blood, and the benefits of intercession; which the heathens also acknowledged in the traditionary rites of their priesthood. It relates the dispersion of the Gentile nations, and the separation of the Hebrews. It foretells the manifestation of a Saviour in the flesh; the rejection of the Jews; the calling and conversion of the heathens; the establishment of the Christian Church, with its preservation against the powers of the world, and the gates of hell. It treats of a spiritual life, and renewed affections in its members; that they must even be born again in a spiritual

manner, and return to a state of childish simplicity in their understandings; it assures us of the resurrection of the body after death; of the future judgment of the world by the man Jesus Christ; of the glorification of the faithful, and the condemnation of the wicked. It opens to us an invisible world of spirits, some of whom are in alliance with God, and others in rebellion against him; assuring us withal, that every man will have his final portion with the one party or the other.

None of these things are known to us by nature; and it is not pretended that they are; for if man draws a scheme of religion for himself, not one of all these articles finds a place in it. Therefore as the nature of man doth not know any of these things till God reveals them, it must of course be under two very great difficulties; first of understanding or comprehending; and secondly, of admitting or receiving them.

From the difficulty we are under of comprehending such things as are above natural reason, the manner of the Scripture is as extraordinary as its matter: and it must be so from the necessity of the case. Of all the objects of sense we have ideas, and our minds and memories are stored with them. But of invisible things we have no ideas till they are pointed out to us by revelation: and as we cannot know them immediately, such as they are in themselves, after the manner in which we know sensible objects, they must be communicated to us by the mediation of such things as we already comprehend. For this reason, the Scripture is found to have a language of its own, which doth not consist of words, but of signs or figures taken from visible things. It could not otherwise treat of God, who is a spirit, and of the

spirit of man, and of a spiritual world; which no words can describe. Words are the arbitrary signs of natural things; but the language of revelation goes a step farther, and uses some things as the signs of other things; in consequence of which, the world which we now see becomes a sort of commentary on the mind of God, and explains the world in which we believe.

It being then the professed design of the Scripture to teach us such things as we neither see nor know of ourselves, its style and manner must be such as are no where else to be found. It must abound with figurative expressions; it cannot proceed without them: and if we descend to an actual examination of particulars, we find it assisting and leading our faculties forward; by an application of all visible objects to a figurative use; from the glorious orb which shines in the firmament, to a grain of seed which is buried in the earth. In this sort of language did our blessed Saviour instruct his hearers; always referring them to such objects as were familiar to their senses, that they might see the propriety and feel the force of his doctrine. This method he observed, not in compliance with any customary figures of speech peculiar to the Eastern people, but consulting the exigence of human nature, which is every where the same. He spake a sort of language which was to be carried out into all lands; and we of the western world are obliged to follow in our preaching of the Gospel, because we cannot otherwise preach it so as to be understood by our hearers. Here I find it necessary to confirm what I have advanced by some examples.

As we have but imperfect notions of the relations and differences between *life* and *death*, our Saviour, when he was about to raise a maid to life, said to

those who were present, *the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.* He did not say she is dead, and I will raise her to life: but she is asleep; whence it was to be inferred, that she would awake. They who were not skilled in the divine language of signs and figures, laughed him to scorn; as if he had spoken in ignorance what was expressed with consummate truth and wisdom: for the substitution of sleep for death, when we have it upon such great authority, has the force and value of a whole sermon in a single word: it is a seed from whence a tree of life may be unfolded.

Upon another like occasion our Saviour expressed himself in the same manner to his disciples: *our friend Lazarus sleepeth;* and when they did not understand the force of his words, he said plainly, *Lazarus is dead.* When he spake of the deadness of the mind, a state, which, however real, must always be invisible, because the mind itself is so; he expressed it under the same term with the death of the body; *let the dead bury their dead:* of which expression no sense can be made by those who are not aware, that the Scripture speaks to us by things instead of words. Admit this principle, and then all is clear and consistent. It is as if Christ had said, "let those who "are dead in their spirits (with respect to the *new* "*life* of the Gospel), employ themselves in burying "those who are dead in body; for they are fit for "nothing else: but by following me and preaching "the Gospel, thou shalt raise men from the death of "sin unto the life of righteousness."

In the writings of the prophets, the spiritual blessings of the Gospel are so constantly described under some allusion to nature, that their expressions are not true till they are figuratively interpreted. Let us

take an example from the prophet Isaiah: *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.* Who ever heard that this was literally fulfilled? In what part of the world were all the mountains levelled; the valleys filled up; the crooked and rough places made straight and plain? But in the figurative sense, all these things were to be brought to pass in the minds of men at the publication of the Gospel, when *all flesh should see the salvation of God* *. Then should the high and mighty of this world be confounded and brought low; the humble should be exalted, the meek encouraged, the crooked ways of men rectified, their wild and rugged tempers softened and civilized.

The bible has farther difficulties arising from another principle. For it pleased God, for wise ends, to exercise the faith and devotion of his people with a system of forms and ceremonies, which had no value but from their signification. I mention no particulars here, because they will occur to us abundantly hereafter; but the fact is undoubted from that general assertion of St. Paul, that *the law had a shadow of good things to come* †: and again, that the instituted meats and drinks, the holy days, new moons and sabbaths, of the law, are *a shadow of things to come*, having their substance in the doctrines and mysteries of Christianity; or, as the apostle speaks, whose *body is of Christ* ‡. And therefore in the Gospel things are still described to us in the terms of the law; the substance itself taking the language of the shadow, that the design of both may be understood: as where the apostle saith, *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,*

* Luke iii. 6. † Heb. x. 1. ‡ Col. ii. 17.

&c. from the application of which term to the person of Christ, we are taught under this one word of the *passover*, that he is to us *a lamb* in meekness and innocence of manners; pure and *spotless* from every stain of sin; *slain* (and that without the *breaking of his bones*) for the *redemption* of his people from the wrath of the destroyer; and *feeding* with his body those who put away all *leaven* from their hearts.

But know, beside this first difficulty, which we are under, of *comprehending* the *matter* of the scripture from the peculiar *manner* in which it is delivered, we are under a second difficulty as to the *receiving* of it; without which our understanding of it will be very imperfect, if any at all. For the force of men's minds is generally found to be according to their affections; for which reason the disaffection of the Jew is attended with a very conspicuous weakness of the understanding. We may lay it down as a certain truth, confirmed by the experience of all men, that when any object is admitted into the mind, it must find a faculty there which corresponds with its own peculiar nature. When there is no appetite, the sweetest meat is of no value, and even the sight and savour of it may be disagreeable. When there is neither ear nor skill in music, heavenly sounds give no delight; and with the blind the beams of the sun give no beauty to the richest prospect. It is thus in every other case of the kind. The mathematician and logician apply to the intuitive faculty of reason; the poet to the imagination or mirror of the mind; the orator to the sensibility of the affections; the musician to the musical ear. The mathematician demonstrates nothing but to patient and attentive reason; to the imagination which is dull the poet is a trifler; on the hard and unfeeling heart the orator makes no

impression: and the sweetest music is referred to the class of noises, where there is no sense of harmony. Thus, when God speaks of things which are above nature, his meaning must be received by a faculty which is not the gift of nature, but superadded to nature by the gift of God himself. For spiritual truth there must be a spiritual sense; and the scripture calls this sense by the name of *faith:* which word sometimes signifies the act of believing; sometimes the matter which is believed; but in many passages it is used for that sense or capacity in the intellect, by which the invisible things of the spirit of God are admitted and approved.

It is a doctrine which may occasion some mortification to human pride, and it seldom fails to do so; but no doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ is more decided than this, that *all men have not faith;* that it is the *gift of God* wherever it is found; and that the *natural man,* or man with no powers but those of our common nature, *receiveth not the things of the spirit of God:* so far from it, that they seem foolish, extravagant, and incredible, and are rejected with mockery and contempt by men who can write a pleasant style, and who seem to be in other respects (within the sphere of their affections) very sensible and ingenious persons. On what other ground but that of the scriptural distinction between faith and natural reason, is it possible to account for a fact which so frequently occurred at the first publication of the gospel; when the same speech, the same reasoning, yea, and the same miracle, had a totally different effect on the minds of different hearers, all present on the same occasion? When Peter and John healed the lame man at the gate of the temple, and all the people were spectators of the fact, the

apostles addressed themselves in a powerful discourse to those who were present; the lame man still cleaving to them, and standing by them as a witness: and thus they made some thousands of converts to the word of the gospel. But behold, the Sadducees were *grieved* at the doctrine of the resurrection, though preached with all the force of truth from their own scriptures, and attended with the credential of an indisputable miracle; which only vexed and distressed them the more. At Athens, the philosophers of the place, proud of their Grecian talent for oratory and disputation, considered the matter of Paul's preaching merely as a new thing, which gave them an opportunity of questioning and wrangling. Some called him a babbler; some said they would hear him again; some mocked at the resurrection of the dead; while Dionysius, one of their senators, Damaris, and some others, clave unto them and *believed*: in other words, they received the gospel with that faculty of the spirit, which alone is susceptible of it. Till there is in man the sense which receiveth these things, the book which treats of them will not be understood.—If they are rejected, we must conclude this sense to be wanting: and when that is the case, the evidence of a miracle will not force its way through the hardness of the human heart. Some speculative writers have treated of credibility and probability, and the nature, and force, and degrees, of evidence, as if we had rules for weighing all truth to a single grain with mechanical certainty: whereas in fact, man, with all his boasted balancings of reason, can resist a proof that would confound a devil. Compare the following examples; The Jews said, "as for this fellow "we know not whence he is." The devils said,

"I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God." The Jews said, that Christ cast out devils through Beelzebub their prince: but the devils never said so themselves. The sun of the noon-day shines without effect upon the blind, because the proper sense is wanting: so saith the Evangelist, *the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.* Vicious inclinations and habits of sin, which render truth disagreeable, are sure to have the effect of weakening and perverting the judgment: *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* The understanding of truth implies a love of truth; and the understanding will be deficient so long as that love is wanting. None are so blind as they who are so by choice; that is to say, the ignorant are never found to be so absurd as the disaffected. The word of God is in itself all-sufficient for the illumination of the mind; it is a seed, quick and vigorous with the principles of life; but, like other seeds, it must find something congenial with itself in the soil into which it falls. The word spoken did not profit the Jews, because it was not *mixed with faith in them that heard it;* there was nothing in the soil to give it nourishment and growth.

The distinction which the scripture hath made between natural and spiritual men; that is, between men that have faith and men that have none, is agreeable to what hath been observed from the beginning of the world; that there have been two classes of people, all sprung from the same original, but totally different in their views, principles, and manners. Before the flood, they were distinguished as the children of Cain, and the children of Seth;

the latter of whom inherited the faith of Abel. After the flood we find them again under the denomination of Hebrews and Heathens. In the gospel they appear to us as the *children of this world,* and the *children of light:* the former, cunning and active in their generation for the interests of this life, the other, wise towards God and the things of eternity. These two run on together, like two parallel lines, through the history of this world: always near to one another, but never meeting. Whoever considers this fact, will not be at a loss for a reason, why the wisdom of God in the scripture is so differently accepted in the world.

Having thus endeavoured to shew that the scripture must have its difficulties, and whence they arise; we shall obtain some farther light, if we enquire what the scripture hath said concerning itself.

The great apostle thus distinguishes between the language of revelation, and the words of human wisdom. "We speak the wisdom of God *in a mys-* "*tery,* even the *hidden wisdom*—which none of the "princes of this world knew; for had they known "it, they would not have crucified the Lord of "glory." By which he means, that the priests and rulers who stood up against the Lord, did so for want of understanding that sense of the scripture which is hidden under the signs and symbols of it, in a way totally different from the wisdom of this world, and which the *natural* man* can neither see nor admit. The word *mystery,* in a vulgar acceptation, is applied to such things as are dark and unintelligible: but to *speak in a mystery,* as the phrase is

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

used in the scripture, is to reveal some sacred and heavenly doctrine under some outward and visible sign of it: and thus the sacraments of the church being outward signs with an inward and spiritual meaning, are also to be understood as mysteries. This sense of the word *mystery* is ascertained by that passage in the revelation; *the* mystery *of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.* To signify a church holding forth the light of the gospel, by that domestic instrument of illumination which holds a candle; and to signify a ruler or teacher by a star which gives light from the firmament of heaven, is to speak under the form of a mystery; which is not necessarily unintelligible, because it is here explained. So in another place; *this is a great mystery,* saith the apostle, *but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* To teach us the union betwixt Christ and the church, for the bringing forth of sons to glory, under the similitude of Adam and Eve united in Paradise for the multiplying of mankind upon earth, is also to speak in a mystery. The sorceress in the Revelation *, who is called by the name of Babylon, hath the word MYSTERY inscribed with that name upon her forehead; because Babylon is there not literal, but figurative or mystical, to denote that abomination of *idolatry,* by the *sorceries* of which all nations were *deceived* †: she sitteth on a *scarlet-coloured beast,* supported by the imperial powers of this world, called, the *kings of the earth:* and the *wine* in her cup is the false doctrine with which she intoxicates the minds of men.

* Chap. xvii. † Chap. xii. 23.

This *hidden wisdom* of the scripture is to be considered as treasure hid in the earth, for which men must search with that same zeal and labour with which they penetrate into a mine of gold: for when our Saviour commands us to *search the scriptures* for their testimony of himself, the language of the precept implies that kind of searching by which gold and silver are discovered under ground. He who doth not search the word of God in that manner, and with that spirit, for what is to be found underneath it, will never discover its true value. The same principle is inculcated with a like allusion, when the divine law is compared to honey and the honeycomb; an inward sense being therein hidden, as when the bee seals up its treasure in the cells of wax: and the one when taken out is as sweet to the understanding as the other is to the palate. It is also as the corn in the husk, which must be taken from thence by the labour of the ox on the threshing floor, (as the custom was of old) before it can support the life of man. As the disciples of Christ plucked the ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands on the sabbath day, so should every Christian preacher handle the word of God before it can give nourishment to their hearers. The labour of the ministry is certainly alluded to in that precept relating to the threshing floor, *thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn:* for the apostle seems to wonder how any could be so absurd as to suppose that God considered nothing but the benefit of the beast on this occasion; as if he had *care of oxen,* when he undoubtedly meant to assign the reward, and signify the work of his *ministers, who labour in the word and doctrine.* It is the work of the ministry to expound the word of God, as the labouring ox in the threshing

floor treadeth out the grain from the chaff: and as the ox is not muzzled at such a time, but partakes freely of the fruits of his labour; so by parity of justice, they who preach the word have a right to live of it.

That there is both a plain and a figurative sense in the language of the scripture, particularly in the law, is clear from the Apostle's reasoning on another occasion. He gives a name to each of these, distinguishing them under the contrary terms of the *letter* and the *spirit:* which terms are not unfrequently applied in the language of civil life to the laws of the land, in which there is a literal sense of the words, and a deeper sense of their general *intention*, called the spirit, which the letter cannot always reach.

The *letter* of the scripture is applied to the outward institutions and ceremonies of the law, as they stand in the words of the law without their interpretation: the *spirit* of them, or the *intention* of the law-giver, is the same with the doctrine of the new Testament, called elsewhere *the good things to come*, of which the law had an image and shadow. In its washings and purifications we see the doctrine of *baptism;* that is, of regeneration by water and the Spirit of God *. In its sacrifices we see the necessity and efficacy of Christ's death once for all. Had it not been necessary for man to be born of the Spirit, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, the law would not have troubled the people with washings and sacrifices; for in that case they would have signified nothing, and consequently would have been superfluous and impertinent: whereas if we take them right, the services of the law are the gospel in figu-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

rative description, and the gospel is the law in spirit and signification. The passover of the law is a sign of Christ that was to come; and Christ when he is come is the sense and signification of the passover. It is the duty of a christian minister not to disappoint the law or the gospel, but to do justice to the wisdom of God in both, and put these things together, for the edification of the people. "Our sufficiency "(saith the apostle) is of God, who hath made us "able ministers of the new testament, *not of the "letter but of the spirit:* for the letter killeth, but "the spirit giveth life." The letter of the law, voided of its evangelical intention, leaves our bodies washed, but our souls unclean; it leaves us nothing but the blood of bulls and of goats, and consequently under guilt and forfeiture; whence the apostle hath truly affirmed, that in this capacity it is a *ministration of death.* In his reasonings with the Jews, he presses them with the unreasonableness and wickedness of resting in the literal observation of the law; telling them, that *by the letter and circumcision they transgressed the law.* But how could this be? did not the law ordain circumcision in the letter? it did undoubtedly: yet, however paradoxical it may appear, the literal observation of the law was a transgression of the law. From whence it is a necessary consequence, that the letter of the law was ordained only for the sake of its spirit or moral intention; which the Jew neglecting, while he trusted in the law as a form, was in effect a transgressor of it; and was condemned in his error by the Gentiles, who without being born under the letter of the law, had now attained to the spirit of it, and were better Jews than the Jews themselves: for, adds the apostle, *he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is*

outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision (as Moses himself had taught *) *is that of* the heart, *in* the spirit *and not in* the letter.

To enquire more particularly into the errors of the Jews and the causes of them, would be foreign to my design. The fact is plain, that they erred by a literal interpretation of their law; and that by still adhering to the same, they are no nearer to the gospel now than they were seventeen hundred years ago. On the other hand, the apostles of Jesus Christ succeeded in their labours by being *ministers of the spirit;* that is, by interpreting and reasoning according to an inward or figurative sense in the law, the prophets, and the psalms. All the fathers of the christian church followed their example: particularly *Origen,* one of the most useful and powerful of primitive expositors. Then were the Jews confounded, the heathens converted, the word of God was efficacious, and the people were edified. The same way of teaching was observed in the middle ages, 'till the times of the reformation; and even then our best scholars still drew their divine oratory, particularly the learned and accomplished *Erasmus,* from the spiritual wisdom of the first ages. To revive and promote which, within my own little sphere, is the design of this and the following Lectures: in all which I shall invariably follow the rule of making the scripture its own interpreter. And now I have opened the way by shewing in what respects and for what reasons the style of the scripture differs from that of other books, and that it is symbolical or figurative: I propose with God's leave to distinguish the figures of the scripture into their proper kinds, with examples and explanations in each kind, from the scripture itself.

* Deut. x. 16.

LECTURE II.

ON THE FIGURES WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCRIPTURE, AND THE SEVERAL KINDS OF THEM.

IT hath been shewn in the former Lecture, that as the scripture teaches spiritual things which cannot be taught in words, the wisdom of God hath made use of *things*, as signs and figures, to explain them. This is done for several reasons: first, because we cannot conceive things of a spiritual nature but by borrowing our notions of them from the things that are visible and familiar to our senses. Secondly, because the scripture can speak under this form to some men, and reveal many things to them, while the same words reveal nothing to others: like that pillar in the wilderness, which was a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians, while it gave light to the Hebrews. Thirdly, because an outward sign, such as those of the scripture are, becomes a pledge and an evidence of the thing signified; as it doubtless is a wonderful confirmation of the gospel to see its mysteries exactly delineated so long before in the services of the

law of Moses; and much more to see them written in the characters of nature itself.

The things which the scripture uses as figures of other things are taken, 1. From the natural creation, or world of sensible objects. 2. From the institutions of the law. 3. From the persons of the prophets and holy men of old time. 4. From the history of the church. 5. From the actions of inspired men, which in many instances were not only miracles but *signs* of something beyond themselves, and conformable to the general plan of our salvation and redemption.

These are the materials of that figurative language in which the bible is written; and of the several kinds of them, as here distinguished, I shall treat in their order, after I have given a general description of each.

1. When any object is taken from the visible creation, and applied as an illustration or sign of some spiritual truth, we call it a natural image. The scripture calls them *similitudes;* as in that passage of the prophet Hosea—*I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets**. A discourse made up of such is called *a parable;* a form of speech which our Saviour as a divine teacher thought most agreeable to the nature of his own preaching, and to the wants of his hearers. In which, however, he only did what the scripture had always done; he instructed the eyes of the understanding by placing some natural object before them; and as the visible world throughout is a pattern of the invisible, the figures of the sacred language built upon the images of nature, are as extensive as the world itself; so that it would be a vain undertaking to interpret all the figures which are reducible to this class.

* Hosea xii. 10.

2. Other figures are borrowed from the institutions of the ceremonial law, which are applied to the things of the gospel; and in this capacity the law is all figure. It is nothing considered in itself but a copy, *a shadow of good things to come;* and as a shadow, it had only the *form*, not the *substance*, (or *very image*, as the scripture calls it) of the things hoped for. Its elements were like those of the gospel in form; and therefore it was a *schoolmaster*, a teacher of such elements as prepared the mind for the reception of a spiritual dispensation, in which its shadows are now realized.

When our Saviour Jesus Christ is called a priest, a character is given to him, which cannot be understood till we go back to the law. There we see what a priest was, and what he did; and thence we learn the nature of our Saviour's priestly office. And as the whole law, in its ritual, consisted chiefly of priestly ministration; then, if the priest himself was figurative, his ministration was so likewise, and consequently the law was a pattern of the gospel.

3. The things relating to our Saviour's person, that is, to his birth, dignity, actions, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorification, were foreshewn in the history of other great and remarkable persons, who, in the former ages of the church, were saviours upon occasion to their people, or examples of persecuted innocence, truth, and holiness, as he was to be. Such persons acting, or suffering, or triumphing, in this prophetic capacity, are called *types*. In the gospel they are called *signs;* and as a specimen for the present, we may take the two characters of *Jonah* and *Solomon*, as referred to in the 11th chapter of St. *Luke*. Our Saviour * proposed Jonah to the Jews as *a sign*

* Matt. xii. 40.

of his own future resurrection. This prophet went down into the mouth of a monster, as Christ was to be swallowed up like other men by the devouring jaws of death. As the prophet was detained there three days, Christ was so long to be confined to the sepulchre: and as Jonah was restored to the light at the divine command, so was Christ to rise again from the dead. Jonah was therefore a sign of his death and resurrection, such as no words could have delivered; for a miraculous fact is best signified by a miraculous sign, which shews us that the thing was known and determined before it came to pass.

Such another sign was *Solomon;* the fame of whose wisdom brought the Queen of Sheba from a heathen land to hear his words, and wonder at the greatness of his kingdom, and admire the order of his government: a sign that the Gentiles should listen to the word of him that was greater than Solomon, and be converted to the laws and œconomy of his spiritual kingdom; while the Jews should despise his words and persecute his church: for which the example of the Queen of Sheba shall rise in judgment to condemn them.

4. Next to the persons of the prophets is the history of the church at large; concerning which the wisdom of God ordained, that things past should represent things to come, and serve as admonitions and signs to the people of God to the end of the world. Hence it comes to pass, that *no scripture is of any private interpretation:* its sense does not end in the persons of whom it speaks, but is of public application for the benefit of all places and of all times. The apostle speaking of some remarkable circumstances in the history of the church, assures us, that all those things *happened for ensamples, and are written for our*

admonition. The deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt was a pledge of our deliverance from this world of sin and bondage; the service of which is perfect slavery, like that of the Hebrews under Pharaoh. Their temptations in the wilderness were like our trials in the passage through this mortal life. Their settlement in Canaan is an earnest to us, that if we commit ourselves in faith to the guidance of God, we shall in like manner obtain the promised inheritance; and that without faith, we shall fall short of it.

Lastly, the actions of the prophets, and particularly of Christ himself, were figurative and prophetical; they are therefore called *signs* as well as miracles, because they carried an instructive signification, and pointed to something greater than themselves. The ways of divine wisdom are comprehensive, and answer many purposes at once. Our Saviour performed many mighty works, that for the sake of them men might believe him to be the Saviour of the world; but then they were withal of such a sort, as to admit of an application to the state of all Christians. We do not hear his voice, bidding us leave our companions in the ship and walk towards him upon the water: but all that will come to him must have their faith exercised, as that of Peter was, upon the waves of this troublesome world; they must undertake a hazardous passage, in which nothing but the power of Christ can support them; and if they cry to him, the same *right hand*, which saved the fearful Apostle, will be *stretched out* to *help* them *in all their dangers and necessities* *; and the same goodness will be tender toward their infirmity in the hour

* See the Collect for the second Sunday after the Epiphany.

of trial; reproving and yet pardoning the deficiencies of their faith.

All the miracles of Christ are after this pattern; they are signs of salvation in all ages, and admit of a general application to every member of the church, with whom the same miraculous power is still present, and acting for the highest purposes, though invisible to mortal sight.

To one or other of these five heads, the spiritual language of the scripture may be reduced, and from them the matter of it is borrowed: 1. From the images of nature, or visible things as representations of things invisible. 2. From the institutions of the law, as prefiguring the things of the gospel. 3. From the persons of the prophets, as types of the great prophet and Saviour that was to come. 4. From the history of the church of Israel as an ensample to the christian world. 5. From the miraculous acts of Moses, Christ, and others, as signs of the saving power of God towards the souls of men. All these things compose the figurative language of the bible; and that interpretation which opens and applies them to the objects of faith, is called a *spiritual* interpretation; as being agreeable to that *testimony* of Jesus, which is the *spirit* of prophecy.

I have been thus particular in the division of my subject, that by understanding at the beginning what my design is in the whole, it may always be known, as I proceed in it, what part I am upon.

Of this figurative language, the elements first to be understood are those which are borrowed from the images of nature. And here a vast field is open to us, as wide as the world itself. If we consider it in due order, we must begin with the creation; which, as related in the book of Genesis, is a pattern of the new

creation in Christ Jesus; and is so applied by the apostle; *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* *. Till this light shines in the heart of man, he is in the same state as the unformed world was, when *darkness lay upon the face of the deep:* and when the new creation takes place, he rises in baptism, as the new earth did from the waters, by the *spirit of God moving* upon them.

The lights of heaven in their order are all applied to give us conceptions of God's power, and shew us the glory of his kingdom. In the 84th Psalm, the *Lord* is said to be *a sun and a shield;* a *sun* to give *light* to his people, and a *shield* to *protect* them from the power of darkness. Christ, in the language of the prophet, is the *sun of righteousness,* who as the natural sun revives the grass, and renews the year, brings on *the acceptable year of the Lord,* and is the great restorer of all things in the kingdom of grace; shining with the new light of *life* and *immortality* to those who once *sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.* And the Church has warning to receive him under this glorious character: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee* †. When he was manifested to the eyes of men, he called himself the *light of the world,* and promised to give the same light to those that follow him. In the absence of Christ as the personal light of the world, his place is supplied by the light of the Scripture, which is still *a lamp to our feet, and a light unto our paths.* The word of prophecy is as *a light shining in a dark place;* and as we study by the light of a

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Isaiah lx. 1.

lamp, so we must give heed to this light, if we would see things to come.

The moon is used as an emblem of the Church; which receives its light from Christ as the moon does from the sun: therefore the renovation of the moon signifies the renovation of the Church; as a sign of which, the new moons were appointed to be observed as religious festivals under the law; and the apostle tells us they were *a shadow of things to come;* and the substance of that shadow is known from the nature of the case, and the relation which the moon bears to the sun.

The angels or ruling ministers in the seven churches of Asia are signified in the book of Revelation by *seven stars* in the right hand of Christ: because his ministers hold forth the word of life, and their light shines before men in this mortal state, as the stars give light to the world in the night season; of which light Christians in general partake, and are therefore called *children of light.*

This natural image of the light is applied to so many great purposes, that I must not dismiss it without making some farther use of it.

You see, our God is light; our Redeemer is light; our Scripture is light; our whole religion is light; the ministers of it are light; all Christian people are children of the light, and have light within them. If so, what an obligation is laid upon us, not to walk as if we were in darkness, but to walk uprightly as in the day, shewing the people of this world, that we have a better rule to direct us than they have. If we who have the light walk as they do who are in darkness, the same darkness will assuredly come upon us; we shall understand nothing; we shall care for nothing; the light that is within us will be changed into darkness; and

then, vanity and confusion will be the consequence, as to those who walk in the dark through a perplexed and dangerous path: and better would it be not to have had the light, than to be answerable for the guilt of having extinguished it and turned it into darkness. This is the moral doctrine to be derived from the usage of light in the sacred language.

Here I would also observe, that the figures of the scripture necessarily introduce something figurative into our worship; of which I could give you several instances: but I shall confine myself to the matter now before us. The primitive Christians signified their relation to the true light, and expressed a religious regard to it, by the outward form of worshipping with their faces towards the east: because there the light first arises out of darkness, and there the day of true knowledge arose, like the sun, upon such as lay buried in ignorance. To this day our churches, especially that part which is appropriated to the most solemn act of christian worship, is placed towards the east; our dead are buried with their faces to the east: and when we repeat the articles of our faith, we have a custom of turning ourselves to the east. The primitive christians called their baptism their *illumination*; to denote which, a light was put into the hands of the person after baptism, and they were admitted to hear the lectures of the catechists in the church, under the name of *the illuminated*. The festival of Christ's baptism was celebrated in the month of January with the ceremony of a number of lighted torches. When the converts repeated the confession of their faith at baptism, they turned themselves to the east; and to the west when they renounced the powers of darkness. In the modern church of Rome this ceremony of worshipping to the east has been abused, and turned into

an act of adoration to the altar; on account of which, some Christians who have heard of the abuse of this ceremony, without knowing the use of it, have rejected that as an act of superstition, which has an edifying sense, and was practised in the days of the apostles, before any superstition had infected the Church. As such only I would recommend it to observation *.

In the element of air, which comes next in order to be considered, we have a figure of the Holy Spirit, which worketh imperceptibly as it listeth, while we cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. The operations of the divine Spirit, are like those of the air, necessary to life; the one to the natural life, the other to the spiritual: and as the air gives the breath of speech, so the Holy Ghost gives the utterance of *inspiration:* therefore he descended on the day of Pentecost under the outward sign of a rushing mighty wind from heaven; and in consequence of it, the apostles spake as the Spirit gave them utterance; and their sound went out into all lands.

The element of water, which washes and purifies the body, is used to signify the inward cleansing of the soul from sin, by the washing of grace in baptism: and all the purifications by water under the law had the

* An excellent sermon, which ought never to be forgotten, and which I carried through the press, when I was an under graduate at Oxford, was published on *Christ the light of the world*, from a verse of the 19th Psalm, by my admired, beloved and lamented friend, the late Rev. *George Watson*, once a fellow of University College, to whose early instructions and example I have been indebted in most of the literary labours of my life. Many extraordinary men have I seen; but for taste in classical literature, and all works of genius; for a deep knowledge of the inspired writings; for readiness of speech and sweetness of elocution; for devout affection towards God, for charitable goodness of heart, and elegance of manners, I never met with one that exceeded him.

like meaning; as they are applied in those words of the prophet: *then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you* *. This new heart and new spirit, as the work of God's grace, was always signified by every act of religious purification; according to that of the Psalmist, *Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow—Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me* †.

Water is used in another capacity to quench the thirst; in which sense it is put for the doctrine of God's word, refreshing and invigorating the soul, as the water of the spring gives new life and strength to the thirsty. As the spring breaks forth from the secret treasures of the earth, the doctrines of salvation proceed from a source which we cannot see. In this sort of language did our Saviour speak of the grace of his own divine doctrine to the woman of Samaria: *if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water* ‡: that is, the doctrine of salvation which he preached to the world, and of which he used these remarkable words in the temple—*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;* that is, the words of his mouth shall convey that doctrine which giveth life to the world: his preaching shall satisfy a multitude of souls, as the stream of a river is sufficient to the quenching of their thirst.

* Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. † Psalm li.

‡ There is a peculiar propriety in the scripture term of *living water* for the water of a running spring; because it brings with it a new life and spirit, which it has derived from the subterraneous chymistry of nature; and it is always found to contain a large quantity of air.

As the elements of the world, so the seasons of the year have their signification in scripture. The beauties of the spring and summer are selected by the prophet Isaiah, to describe the perfection and felicity of Messiah's kingdom at the appearance of the gospel: when righteousness should spring up among the barren Gentiles who had been fruitless and deserted as the earth when forsaken by the sun; *The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God**. The season of the harvest, which came in at the end of the Jewish year, is applied in a parable of our Saviour to the great ingathering of the world, when the wheat shall be reaped, the tares shall be separated for the fire, and the labourers employed in that great work shall be the ministring spirits of God, sent forth to gather his elect, and to finish his kingdom upon earth. *The Harvest* of our Lord, *is the end of the world;* and as surely as the course of the year brings us about to that season, so surely will the dispensation of God, now on its progress, bring us to a sight of that other harvest: and it behoves us to consider well what part we are likely to bear on that occasion.

From the seasons let us turn our eyes to the animal creation; at the head of which is man, an epitome of all the other works of God.

The œconomy and disposition of the human body is used as a figure of that spiritual society, or corporate body, which we call the Church; and God is said to have disposed the offices of the one in con-

* Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2.

formity to the order observable in the other. The head is Christ; the eyes appointed to see for the rest of the body, are the prophets and teachers, antiently called *seers*. The hands that minister are the charitable and merciful, who delight in supplying the wants of their fellow members. The feet are the inferior attendants, whose duty it is to know their place, and be subservient in their proper callings. Each hath his proper gifts and his proper station; and as there is no respect of persons with God, no man should pay any undue respect to himself; but all should unite with humility and piety in fulfilling the great purpose of God, who hath joined them together in one communion. As there is no division in the natural body, but all the limbs and members have care for one another, and one life animates them all; so it should be in the church, where there is *one body and one spirit*. In this form hath the apostle argued against the divisions and jealousies then prevailing in the church of Corinth *: and if his argument was considered as it merits, and in that spirit of fervent zeal and love with which it was written, there would be no such thing as schism in the church, or faction in the state.

The bodily senses of men are used to denote the faculties of the mind: for the soul has its senses; but as we cannot see their operations, it is necessary to speak of them in such terms as are taken from the visible powers of the body. He that does not understand the language of the scripture, is said to have *no ears*; he that does not see spiritual things, to have *no eyes*; he that cannot make confession of his faith with his tongue, and has no delight in the praises of God, is *dumb*. In short, every unregenerate man, who is

* See 1 Cor. xii.

without the knowledge of God, and has nothing but what nature and his own vanity give him, is in the nature and condition of a beggar, *poor and blind and naked**; and he who is not yet alive in spirit, is even taken for dead and buried, and is called upon to *arise from the dead*, and *awake unto righteousness*.

The soul being invisible, its distempers are so; therefore the sacred language describes them by the distempers of the body. A nation or city, in a state of sin and impenitence, are represented to themselves as a body full of diseases and sores. In this style the spirit speaks by the prophet Isaiah of Judah and Jerusalem; *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head*, from the lowest of the people up to their princes and rulers, *there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores*. In the same way, the works of the devil in stripping and abusing the nature of man by the fatal introduction of sin, are represented as wounds given by a thief, who meets him on the road, and leaves him naked and half dead upon the earth. This is the intention of that parable, which describes the fall and salvation of man, as the relieving and curing of a wounded traveller.

The support of man's spiritual life is like the support of his natural; and the sacrament of the Lord's supper, (which some of late have taken great pains to undervalue and misinterpret) is built upon this similitude.

Man is sent into the world to earn his bread by his labour, and some think he is sent for nothing else; but this is only a shadow of his proper errand, which is, to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling*:

* Rev. iii. 17.

and for this work he has need of sustenance, as much as for the daily labours of his life. Therefore God has provided a supply of a spiritual kind, signified outwardly by the figures of bread and wine, the commemorative sacrifice of the death of Christ, and the instituted means of conveying the benefits of it to the souls of men. Beasts killed in sacrifice were fed upon by the offerers; and Christ's death being a sacrifice, he is fed upon in faith by those who thus commemorate his death: and the consequence is the *strengthening and refreshing of their souls:* if not, this absurdity should follow from the parrallel, that eating the flesh of sacrifices was a mere ceremony which contributed nothing to the nourishment of the body. What can be more express than the doctrine of our Saviour himself upon this subject? *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed—He that eateth me, even he shall live by me;* that is, shall live with a new and divine life, as really as his body lives and is nourished by his daily bread. Unless these words do signify, that a real principle of life and strength is derived to us from the body of Christ, whereof we partake, there can be no certainty in language, and every doctrine of the scripture may be thrown into doubt and obscurity. Without faith, as it hath already been argued in the proper place, the language of the scripture never was nor ever will be admitted in its true sense; but with it, it is clear enough to every reader.

This first head of my subject is so copious, that I must conclude here, and defer what remains to the next Lecture.

LECTURE III.

ON THE FIGURES OF THE SCRIPTURE WHICH ARE TAKEN FROM NATURE.

(A CONTINUATION OF THE FORMER.)

THE former Lecture would not allow me room to explain the figures which the scripture hath borrowed from the natural world and the objects of common life; though I determined to select such of them only as might be thought most important and instructive: and even now, the subject is so copious, that I must leave many which I should be glad to treat of.

From the consideration of the heavens, the elements and the seasons, we descended to man, whose bodily life is a pattern and shadow of his spiritual life, and is applied to illustrate it in many instances.

From his natural, we must now go forward to his social, civil, or political life, as a citizen, subject, and member of society; together with his worldly condition, relations, offices, and occupations.

The spiritual state, or kingdom of heaven, is represented to us under the emblem of an earthly kingdom, in which God is the supreme governor and judge, ruling all his creatures with infinite power, and according to the laws of justice, goodness, and mercy.

The church is a spiritual kingdom under Christ its head; and its ministers are ambassadors, commissioned to treat with the world, and propose terms of reconciliation from God, with whom they are by nature at enmity. St. Paul, having occasion to speak of his commission under Jesus Christ, saith, *for whom I am an ambassador in bonds.* This was a strange case; and he mentions it as such; because the persons of ambassadors were accounted sacred, and it was against the law of nations to do any violence to them: but the world, while it keeps good faith with itself, keeps none with God. Our blessed Saviour, as Pilate truly entitled him upon the Cross, was the *King of the Jews*, though not after the form and authority of worldly kingdoms; and as such had a claim to the allegiance of his subjects. Their rebellious treatment of him and his ambassadors is represented in the parable of the marriage of the king's son *; whose invitation they rejected, and abused his servants. In consequence of this his armies were sent out, to do execution upon them as murtherers, and burn up their city: all of which was fulfilled upon the apostate Jews, and their city Jerusalem: and having rejected him, they are to this day without a king, without laws, without a country.

There is another parable of the same kind, which admits of a more general application, and comes home to ourselves. Christ ascending into heaven, there to receive all power, and return invested with it to the general judgment, is signified under the person of *a nobleman who went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return—But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us* †. Thus insolently and

* Matth. xxii. † Luke xix. 12.

ungratefully doth a wicked world treat the authority of Christ in his absence: but he shall *return;* and then the authority they will not admit for their good, will be turned to their destruction—*Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.* Not all the powers upon earth can hinder the execution of this command—*bring them hither*—wherever these offenders shall then be, they will all be found; even the grave shall not hide them, the dust shall not cover them; but the ministers of vengeance will drag them forth, and present them before that king whom they hated and affronted. Some there are, who send their message after him in terms of open treason and defiance; while others explain away the sense and authority of his kingdom with subtilties of logic and a mask of piety. But let them speak or reason as they please, the proudest of them all are under the power of Jesus Christ: those who do not allow of his spiritual authority in his kingdom the church, are still within the reach of his justice. Happiest are they, in whose hearts the kingdom of God is established according to those words which were spoken of it—*the kingdom of God is within you;* and who can pray daily, as they are commanded, that his *kingdom* may *come;* that it may prevail over our affections, and direct all our doings, till at length it shall be manifested over all, and the king himself shall appear in his glory.

The judgment passed by the magistrate in this world against crimes is founded on the law of God, and is an administration of *his* justice for the time being; an earnest of that more equal and perfect administration which is to come. Every tribunal before which criminals are summoned is a prelude to

the day of doom, when *the judgment shall sit, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the dead shall be judged out of those things that are written.* This may seem distant to us now, in our blind way of considering things; but in the language of the scripture it is otherwise: *behold,* saith St. *James,* the *judge standeth before the door,* ready to enter, and to bring every secret work, and every neglected and perverted cause into judgment.

Other figures of the scripture are taken from the state in which mankind are engaged under the dangers of *war.* As men are troubled with violence and treachery from one another; so is there another warfare more hazardous, to which all Christians are enlisted under the *captain of their salvation,* against enemies whom no man can see; active, subtle, vigilant, malignant spirits; for, *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.* As men prepare for an earthly war, so are we to prepare ourselves that we may *stand in the evil day:* we are to put on the *whole armour of God,* as the apostle hath described it; we are to take the *shield of faith,* the *sword* of God's word, *the helmet of salvation;* and to pray that we may be inspired with fortitude, and assisted in the use of them. We have treachery as well as force to guard against. There are deceitful lusts which assume the mask of pleasure, while they are *warring against the soul,* as it were by sap, to undermine and destroy it.

No man can use a sword with skill, but he who hath been instructed in the art of defence, and hath practised it long: so can no man handle the word of God aright, that *sword of the spirit,* but he that has studied it diligently. With unskilful handling by the ignorant, or the ill-disposed, it may wound our-

selves, and our friends, like a sword in the hands of a child or a madman.

Amongst the *occupations* of men, the chief is that of husbandry; and it will afford us much instruction. As the field is the subject of man's labour, so man himself is a field under the cultivation of God: *ye are God's husbandry*, saith the apostle. All the particulars in the course of husbandry are fulfilled in our hearts. For as the ground is broken and cleared, so is the heart to be prepared by repentance: whence the prophet Hosea thus calls upon the people; *break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord.* In the parable of the sower, *the seed is the word of God*, quick and powerful with the principles of life; and the different kinds of soil denote the various dispositions with which men receive the word of God; some few into *an honest and good heart;* many more into hearts open as the common high-way to the lusts of the world and the visits of Satan; and as such people understand nothing spiritual, they immediately lose what they receive. Some, whose minds are shallow, cannot retain it, as not having depth enough for the word to be rooted, so as to withstand trials and temptations, signified by the scorching heat of the sun upon a stony soil. Some are so full of care and business, that the word can no more thrive, than seed among thorns and thistles.

I would propose this parable of the sower as a specimen of the excellence of that figurative mode of instruction so constantly pursued throughout the scripture. See how much doctrine, enough to fill a volume, is here comprehended in how few words; in a form striking to the imagination, and plain to every capacity!

Another sort of husbandry, not so familiar to us in

this climate, is the cultivation of the vineyard. In countries nearer to the sun, vines are cultivated in the fields, and employ many hands to plant and dress them, and gather their fruits. In the 5th chapter of Isaiah there is a mystical song, which considers the church of Israel as the vineyard of God, planted in a fruitful situation on the holy hill of Sion, cleared, fenced and guarded, furnished with every thing that could render it complete and keep it in its perfection. Instead of good fruit it produced wild grapes, as bad as if it had been left without cultivation. For this, its hedge was to have been taken away, and it was to be eaten up; that is, the heathens round about it were to be let in upon it to devour it, and it was to be trodden down: no rain was to fall upon it; the blessing of divine grace from heaven was to be withheld; and thorns and briars, all sorts of wicked people, under the figure of every worthless, troublesome and accursed plant, were to prevail in it.

In the 80th psalm, the spoiling of the church is lamented under the same image. It is described as *a vine brought out of Egypt* by the hand of God, to be rooted in Canaan; from whence the heathens were cast out to *make room for it*, as the ground is cleared of stones and rubbish for a new plantation. But for its unfruitfulness, the boar out of the wood laid it waste, and the wild beast of the field devoured it. Such ever was and ever will be the fate of the church: when it becomes degenerate, and unworthy of the hand that planted it, the world is let in upon it; who are as eager to plunder, lay it waste, and trample it down, as the swine to root up the ground and destroy a plantation.

In the new testament, the members of the church are considered more particularly as branches of Christ:

I am the true vine, says he, *and my father is the husbandman:* as the branches of the vine are dressed, so are the members of Christ under the discipline of God: correction is as necessary to them as the pruning knife to the vine; and as the branches bear no fruit but as they belong to the tree, so can no member of the church bring forth any fruit but by abiding in Christ; for *without* him we *can do nothing*. The unprofitable branch, that bears no fruit, is taken away from the tree, to be burned; and the fruitless Christian must expect to be cast forth in like manner, and then gathered up for the fire.

The offices of men are applied to the same purpose as their occupations. God is pleased to take upon himself the office of *a shepherd,* and his *people* are related to him as *a flock*. Two of the psalms are composed upon this plan; expressing the reliance of believers on the pastoral care of God, and their joy and thankfulness to him for admitting them to such an honourable relation: *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing: he shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.* Such is the language of the 23rd psalm. The 100th psalm is an invitation to a solemn act of thanksgiving, with songs and instruments of music in the temple. The people of all nations being admitted into the flock of Israel as *the sheep* of God's *pasture,* ought to assemble within the fold of his church, for the public celebration of his truth and mercy. The obligation is particular and special upon Christians, since our Lord appeared personally to men in this character; verifying that prediction of the prophet; *he shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.* To every act of care and kindness proper to a shepherd did he conde-

scend: he took *the little children up in his arms, and blessed them;* he went about seeking the *lost sheep of the house of Israel;* he collected together and ordered the fold of his church; he has appointed other shepherds under him to take the charge of his flock, and is with them as *the chief shepherd* to the end of the world, when he shall still appear and act in the same character, separating the sheep from the goats in the day of judgment.

All the natural relations subsisting amongst mankind are applied to illustrate their spiritual interests. God is our heavenly Father, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named:* the Church is the daughter of God; the spouse of Christ, and the *mother of us all.* Christ is *the first-born,* and all christians are brethren in him; constituting together what is called the *household of faith,* as distinguished from the world of unbelievers. The Jew and Gentile are two brethren, the sons of their father; the Jew, the elder, the Gentile the younger, whose apostacy and repentance are both described in the history of the prodigal son.

The union betwixt Christ and the Church is considered as a marriage, signified and foreshewn by the first sacred union of Adam and Eve in paradise. The followers and friends of Christ are now waiting in expectation of being called forth to meet this bridegroom, and join in the glorious procession that shall ascend, under the conduct of a train of angels, *to meet the Lord in the air,* when he shall return from the wedding; with which expectation they are to keep their *loins girded up,* and their *lights burning.* Woe be unto the foolish, whose lamps shall be gone out when the cry shall be raised at midnight, *behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.*

As the author of our faith, Christ is our *master* or teacher: and that in so strict a sense, that we are to call no other by that name in comparison of him; much less are we to receive any other form of doctrine, from those who assume a right of teaching on the authority of any other person, or by any other rule, which the fashion of the times or the prejudices of education may have established amongst us.

This relation betwixt the master and the scholar must suggest to every Christian the indispensible duty of knowing the scriptures, and following the precepts of the gospel. For, let us ask ourselves: are we the scholars of Jesus Christ, and are we ignorant of his doctrine? Do we pay no regard to his discipline, and the rules he has given for the conduct of life? And shall we not in such a case be disowned and expelled from his society? If we know nothing of him, he will know nothing of us, and will signify the same to us upon an awful occasion—*Depart from me, I know you not.*

Having thus far shewn how the nature, state, works, offices, and relations of mankind are applied, and how the scripture reasons from them, as from so many parallel cases; I shall now consider what use is made of the inferior part of the animal creation. And here you are to recollect, that beasts differ from one another as men do, the sober from the sottish, the gentle from the ravenous, the trusty from the thievish, the peaceable and obedient from the blood-thirsty and rebellious: and as the scripture expresses all things by similitudes, the properties and qualities of beasts are examples of virtues and vices amongst men. This moral difference was the ground of the distinction of beasts under the law of Moses into clean and unclean. The people of God were to eat of no un-

clean creature; they were to converse with no unclean man; and so the first effect of this law was of a civil nature, to keep the Jews separate from the conversation of other nations, that they might not learn their works. They could not eat with them, and consequently could not keep company with them; and this law has the same effect to this day with the modern Jews. The second intention of it was of a moral or spiritual kind; to suggest a figurative lesson of purity, obedience, and patience, from the various instincts of animals.

Read the 11th chapter of *Leviticus*, and you will see how the creatures are distinguished. The gentle, tame, and profitable kinds are allowed for food: and all creatures of wild, fierce, or filthy manners, are forbidden. Thus the Israelites were reminded daily by what they ate, what manner of persons they ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness; by what was forbidden, they were taught to abhor the vices of the heathen. So saith the law itself: *Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nations which I cast out before you—I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people; ye shall therefore put a difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean—and ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine* *. This passage puts the moral intention of the distinction of meats out of dispute, and is indeed a direct affirmation of it: the people of God were to avoid *unclean meats*, as a sign that he had separated them from *unclean Gentiles* to be *holy* unto himself.

But in the fulness of time, when the Gentiles were

* Lev. xx. 23, &c.

to be admitted to Christian baptism, and taken into the church with the Jews, this act of grace in the divine œconomy was signified to St. *Peter*, by a new licence to feed upon unclean beasts. The case was this: Peter was about to be invited to preach the gospel to *Cornelius* a *Roman, into whose house he could not come;* because the law which he had always observed commanded the Jews to keep themselves separate from heathens in their conversation; as, in their diet, they abstained from unclean beasts.

While this matter was depending, Peter fell into a trance, and saw a vision. A great sheet, knit at the four corners, was let down to the earth, containing all those living creatures which were forbidden food by the Levitical law, and he was commanded to kill and eat: to which when he objected, as being contrary to the law, a voice said, *what God hath cleansed that call not thou common.* The message from Cornelius which immediately followed, shewed the design of this vision; that it signified the reception and cleansing of the Gentile world, and that the Jews were no longer to count them unclean. So Peter himself thus explained it when he visited Cornelius: *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.* Therefore those living creatures of all kinds, which had been presented to him in the vision, were the people of all nations; the linen sheet which contained them signified their sanctification by the gospel; and it was knit at four corners, to shew that they were gathered together from the four quarters of the world, and brought into the church.

Nothing more need be said to prove that the dis-

tinctions amongst men were figuratively expressed under the law by a distinction amongst beasts and birds, and all living creatures. In the subtilty of the fox, the fierceness of the tyger, the filthiness of the swine, the impudence of the dog, you see, as in a glass, the manners of those idolatrous nations, from whom the Jews were separated. In the gentleness of the sheep, the integrity of the labouring ox, the innocence and profitableness of other tame creatures fit for food, you see the virtues of an *Israelite indeed*, such as those people ought to be, who were gathered into the fold of the Church, and had God for their shepherd. But when God had mercy upon all, and the Jew and Gentile became one fold in Christ Jesus, then this distinction was set aside. However, to all readers of the bible, the moral or spirit of this law is as much in force as ever. Wild, subtile, fierce, unclean manners, are as hateful in Christians, as they were of old in heathens: and the heathens were taken into the Church, on condition that they should put off their savage manners; as the unclean creatures had before put off their natures and become tame, when they were admitted into the ark of Noah, a figure of the Church. This change was again to happen under the Gospel; and the prophet foretels the conversion of the heathens under the figure of a miraculous reformation of manners in wild beasts: *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together;* and though they were once so fierce and terrible that a man dared not to come near them, they shall be so changed, that a *little child* may *lead* them—*they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*

Authors of natural history divide their subject into three parts, under the heads of animals, plants, and

minerals—I would follow the same order to keep my subject within a moderate compass.

Plants are applied to explain the growth of the mind, with its different qualities and productions. Thus preached John the Baptist: *The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* At the transgressions of former times God had winked, and suffered men to walk in their own ways; but now the serious day of reformation was come, and men were commanded to repent or to look for speedy execution; which accordingly came upon the unbelieving Jews, who did not take the Baptist's warning. The axe was sharp; and the hand that held it being just and irresistible, it soon laid them level with the ground.

In the first Psalm, the righteous man is described as *a tree* flourishing *by the water side*, and bringing forth its fruit in due season. Such is he whom the grace of God attends, and whose delight is in meditating day and night upon the law of the Lord; while the ungodly are like unprofitable *chaff, driven away by the wind.* No fruitless tree will be permitted to remain in the plantation of God, nor be *able to stand* when the storm of judgment arises. Christians who do not persevere, but fall away into a sinful and unprofitable life, are compared to *trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots:* dead once by nature, and dead again unto grace, after they had been revived by the reception of the Gospel: of such there is no hope.

The transitory nature of man in this mortal life is shewn by the herbs of the field; and the Scripture draws this picture with such beauty as far surpasses the most laboured poetical elegies on mortality—*In*

the morning it is green and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, dried up and withered.—All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:—the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever†.* In their decay, the herbs of the field are patterns of man's mortality; but in the order of their growth, from seeds dead and buried, they give a natural testimony to the doctrine of the resurrection; and the apostle therefore speaks of bodies rising from the dead as of so many seeds springing from the ground. The prophet Isaiah speaks as expressly upon the same subject: *thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead‡.*

Much instruction is to be gathered from the treasures which men take (with other views) from beneath the earth: for perishable riches are figures of the *true riches*, which give in substance what the other give in shadow: these are the riches of the mind; and though of little esteem with the generality of the world, they are yet of infinite value to those that possess them. The apostles of Jesus Christ were poor in appearance, but could boast of being able to *make many rich* in faith and knowledge. The gifts of God to the mind are represented in one of the parables as so many *talents* of money, entrusted to men by the Lord of all things, with which they are to traffick in this state of probation, and improve them to the best of their power. He who makes no improvement will lose what he has got, and then he is poor indeed.

* Psalm xc. † Isaiah xl. 6. ‡ Isaiah xxvi. 19.

In the prophecy of Daniel, the four monarchies of the world were signified by the chief metals which are taken from the earth, all united in that visionary image which appeared to Nebuchadnezzar. The *head of gold* meant the *Assyrian* monarchy; the breast of *silver* was the *Persian;* the *brazen* part was the *Grecian;* and the legs and feet of *iron* and *clay* were the *Roman.* The last was inferior to all the rest in quality, but exceeded them in strength, as iron breaks all other things in pieces. The kingdom of Christ, arising in the time of the fourth monarchy, is meant by the *stone cut out of the mountain* (that is, out of the Church) *without hands,* to smite this mighty image of worldly power upon the *feet,* and overthrow it. Accordingly, as Christianity grew stronger, the Roman empire declined, and was soon reduced nearly to the state in which we now see it *.

We have taken a review of the natural creation, so far as the compass of these Lectures will permit, and have seen how the Scripture has applied the several parts of it for the increase of our faith and the improvement of our understandings. Thus we are taught how to make the best and the wisest use to which this world can be applied. The Creator himself hath made this use of it, in revealing his will by it, and referring man to it for instruction from the beginning. For this use he intended it when it was made; and without such an intention, there never could have been such an universal agreement between nature and revelation.

* The reader may see the three kingdoms of plants, animals, and minerals, considered more at large in Three Discourses preached at *Fairchild's* Lecture, by the Author of this work. Printed for Messrs. *Robinson*, Pater-noster-row.

In this use of the world men differ from brutes, who can see it only with the eyes of the body, and can apply it to nothing but the gratification of the appetites. The ambitious and the covetous are wasting their time to gain as much as they can of it, without knowing what it is; as children covet new books for the pictures and the gilding, without having sense to improve by what is within them. To those who consider only how the creation can furnish matter to their lusts and passions, it is no better than a vain shadow: but to those who take it rightly, it is a shadow of heavenly things; a school in which God is a teacher; and all the objects of sense in heaven and earth, and under the earth, are as the letters of a universal language, in which all nations have a common interest.

There was an opinion, (I should rather call it a *tradition*) amongst some heathen philosophers, that the *world is a parable*, the literal or bodily part of which is manifest to all men, while the inward meaning is hidden, as the soul in the body, the moral in the fable, or the interpretation in the parable*. They

* Εξεστι γαρ και τον Κοσμον ΜΥΘΟΝ ειπειν· σωματων μεν και χρηματων εν αυτων φαινομενων ψυχων δε και νοων κρυπτομενων. Sallust. Περι θεων. cap. 3.

Κοσμον δε αυθις τον μεν νοητον ειδεν η βαρβαρος φιλοσοφια, τον δε αισθητον· τον μεν αρχετυπον, τον δε εικονα τυ καλυμενυ παραδειγματος. Και τον μεν ανατιθησι Μοναδι, ως αν νοητον· τον δε αισθητον Εξαδι. Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 5. p. 412.

"We may call the world a fable, or parable; in which there is an "outward appearance of visible things, with an inward sense which "is hidden as the soul under the body.

"There is a barbarous philosophy, (*i. e.* a *foreign* philosophy) "which hath a knowledge of the *sensible* and the *intellectual* worlds; "the one being the archetype or original, the other an image or "copy of it. It compares the intellectual to *unity*, and the sensible "to the number *six*."

had heard there was such a thing; but to us the whole secret is opened, by the scripture accommodating all nature to things spiritual and intellectual; and whoever sees this plan with an unprejudiced mind, will not only be in a way to understand the bible, but he will want no other evidence of the Christian doctrines.

This barbarous philosophy, so called by Plato, whose doctrine is here repeated by Clemens Alexandrinus, was no where to be found but in the bible; which in its week of days, has a single day, the sabbath, answering to the divine *rest* of the invisible world, and six days allotted to the works of this present world. Nothing but the Mosaic cosmogony, which describes the creation of the natural world in six days, and makes one heavenly day of the sabbath, could be the original of this philosophy mentioned by Plato.

That certain characteristics of divine truth are legible in the works and ways of Nature, is no new doctrine. It hath been supposed by some, and lightly touched upon by others; but never pursued (as I have found) to any good effect. The two preceding Lectures give some little prospect of it as it stands in scattered passages of the scripture. But I am so much affected to the plan, that I have drawn out two Lectures upon it, under the title of *the Natural Evidences of the Christian Religion*, not yet published.

LECTURE IV.

ON THE ARTIFICIAL OR INSTITUTED FIGURES OF THE LAW OF MOSES.

NEXT in order to those figures of the scripture which may be called *natural*, as being taken from nature, we are to examine those which are borrowed from the institutions of the law, and may be called *artificial*, as being ordained and accommodated to this purpose by the lawgiver himself.

The chief ordinances of the law are referred to in the prophets, the psalms, and the new testament, and many passages are cited from thence and treated of by Christ and his apostles, which will serve as a key to the language of the law, and shew us the intention of its ceremonies and precepts.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, gives us this general idea of the law, that it had *a shadow of good things to come* *; by which he means to teach us, that it was in its ordinances a figure of the blessings of the gospel. It was, as a shadow is, just and descriptive in its lineaments, but it had in itself neither substance nor life. When the gospel refers us to the law, it refers us to a shadow of itself; and such references will necessarily be figurative and want an interpretation; of which I shall now proceed to give some examples.

* Heb. x. 1.

Among the institutions of the law, the first place is due to its sacrifices and priesthood; and the first and greatest sacrifice of which we have any particular description is that of the passover. From this the apostle instructs us in the benefits of Christ's death, together with the qualifications necessary to a participation of them; and in so doing he uses the terms of the institution itself; *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us**. This expression carries us back to the cause and end for which the passover was instituted; and it appears from this reference of the apostle, 1. That Christ is what the passover was, a lamb taken from the flock of his people. 2. That he was a sacrifice, put to death as an offering to God. 3. That this was done *for us*, for our redemption and deliverance from the divine wrath; as the passover was sacrificed for the redemption of the Hebrews, when the first born of Egypt were destroyed.

All this is comprehended in the use the apostle has made of those terms: and this will be still plainer, if we attend to the particulars. For the character of our blessed Saviour was answerable in all respects to that of the paschal lamb: he was without blemish, innocent and perfect in his nature; and, as the prophet describes him, like the *lamb when brought to the slaughter* †, meek and unresisting. When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus to the Jews as the Messiah, he chose to do it in those words, *behold the lamb of God*‡; see and acknowledge the true passover which God himself hath provided, not for the deliverance of a single nation, but to *take away the sin of the world*. Whatever the law had ordained concerning the offering of lambs in the passover, and in the daily sacri-

* 1 Cor. v. 7. † Isaiah liii. 7. ‡ John i. 29.

fices of the morning and evening, all is explained in this short reference of John the Baptist, applying the sacrifices of the law to the true *lamb of God.* In the same gospel of St. John we find another remarkable allusion to the institution of the passover. From the circumstance which happened at our Saviour's death, that *his legs were not broken* with those of the two malefactors, the evangelist observes, *these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken;* at which passage the margin of our best editions of the bible refers us to Exodus xii. 46. where this direction is given concerning the passover, *neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*

If we look to the design or occasion of his sacrifice, we find it the same in effect with that of the passover: for as that was slain for the Hebrews in Egypt, so was He sacrificed *for us.* The first born of Israel would have been destroyed with those of Egypt, but for the blood of the paschal lamb upon the doors of their houses; and we also who are, as the Hebrews were, in a land of bondage, among sinful people devoted to destruction, shall not escape the divine wrath in that night when the destroyer shall be sent out, but in virtue of the true passover: therefore we are said to *have redemption through his blood.* The term *redemption,* as applied to the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, is taken in a figurative sense. It signifies literally the release of a captive or guilty person, in consideration of something accepted in lieu of him. All men are in a state of forfeiture, sold under sin, and captives of Satan: out of which condition, they are *not redeemed with silver and gold,* as common captives, *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;* that is, as the Hebrews were in Egypt by the blood of the passover.

The frame of mind in which we are to celebrate the Christian Passover, is described to us in terms borrowed from the Jewish: this feast we are to keep with *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth;* free from all impure mixtures of worldly affections, pharisaical pride, hypocrisy, and false doctrine. To which those other descriptive ceremonies may be added, of having *our loins girded, our shoes on our feet,* and *our staves in our hands;* in the garb and posture of *pilgrims,* soon to depart from the Egypt of this world.

Some other forms with which sacrifices were offered are of great account, and will explain to us the sense of many passages not otherwise to be understood. Christ as our substitute, is said to have *borne* our griefs and carried our sorrows; and the Lord is said to have *laid on him the iniquities of us all**. According to the form prescribed in the law, when a sacrifice was brought to the priest, it was the custom for the sinner, *or the congregation at large* †, as the occasion might require, to lay their hands upon the head of the victim, and confess their sins upon it, which the innocent animal about to die was to bear for them; and the sins so transferred from the sinner to the offering were to be done away. This shews us what was meant by the prophet, when he said, *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all;* that is, he hath laid upon the head of Christ, as upon a devoted sacrifice, the sins of all mankind.

In the case of what was called the *scape goat* ‡, the animal, with this burden of sin upon his head, was

* Isaiah liii. 4. 6.

† The elders of the congregation (see Lev. iv. 15.) or the high priest in the name of the congregation. (see Lev. xvi. 24.)

‡ Lev. xvi. 22.

turned loose into a wilderness, into *a land not inhabited*, no more to be seen of men: with allusion to which it is said in the Psalms, *as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he set our sins from us* *, no more to be remembered or heard of to our condemnation. There seems to be another reference to the same in those words of Jer. i. 20. "the iniquity of Israel "shall be *sought for*, and there shall be none; and "the sins of Judah, and they shall *not be found*."

On one particular occasion, the congregation were commanded to lay their hands upon the head of the guilty person, before he was carried out to execution: which ceremony explains what is said of those for whom no atonement was to be accepted, that they should *bear their iniquity*; they should suffer for it themselves and be their own sacrifice. So again, where it is said, *his blood shall be upon his head* †, it means that the person in this case should be answerable for the guilt of his own death. And when the Jews blasphemously cried out, *his blood be on us, and on our children*, they meant, that whatever sin there might be in putting Jesus to death, they would venture to have the guilt of it laid upon the heads of themselves and their posterity, and atone for it in their own persons; which they have accordingly, by the just judgment of God, been doing ever since.

This laying of sin upon the head of a sacrifice, gives us a farther understanding of what happened to Christ in his passion, when the curse of our sins was crushed with heavy and merciless hands upon his head, in the form of a crown of thorns; under which afflicting burden he was duly prepared as an offering for sin. Hence we also see the meaning of a like form which

* Psalm ciii. 12. † Joshua ii. 19.

has a contrary intention; for as the curse of guilt was laid on the head of a sacrifice; so blessings of every kind are conveyed by the laying of hands on the heads of the persons who are appointed to receive them. Thus our Saviour took the little children into his arms, and when he blessed them he *laid his hands upon them*: thus also the sick were restored to the blessings of health; and thus the ministers of God receive their commission, with the gifts necessary to the exercise of it: *stir up the gift of God*, saith Paul to Timothy, *which is in thee by the putting on of my hands* *.

When Christ is said to be *a priest*, we must understand the word in a new sense: for certainly he was not a priest in a literal sense, neither could he officiate according to the forms of the law, because he was not of that tribe to which the priesthood pertained. He is therefore called a priest *after the order of Melchizedec*, whose priesthood was prior and superior to that of the Levitical order, and carried with it the administration of *bread* and *wine* †, after the form of the gospel itself. Yet still we must go to the Levitical law, for the nature of the office, and the proper character of our high priest. *Such an high priest became us*, saith the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens* ‡. Such an high priest as the law had in all respects, according to the letter; such ought we to have in the spirit; one in whom all the outward signs of holiness and perfection requisite to the high priesthood of the law should be inwardly verified and accomplished; with no blemish of nature, no defilement of sin; sanctified

* 2 Tim. i. 6. † Gen. xiv. 18. ‡ Heb. vii. 26.

by an eternal consecration, and exalted to execute that office in the heaven itself, which the high priest performed yearly in the most holy place of the tabernacle. Even the clothing of the high priest was not without its signification; his garments were expressive of purity, sanctity and divinity itself: they are therefore called *holy garments* *; and there is a reference to them in the psalms which gives them this meaning, *let thy priests be clothed with righteousness* †; let them be in spirit and in truth what their clothing outwardly signifies: the *fine white linen* worn by the priest is here applied in its emblematical capacity to spiritual sanctification; and it is thus interpreted for us in the Revelation; *the fine linen is the righteousness of saints* ‡. The sense of this is still preserved amongst us, with those who understand it right; it being the custom for a bride to go to her marriage in *white*, as a testimony of her virgin state; and they who minister in the Church, either to serve, or to pray, or to sing, are clothed in white linen, to signify the purity which is proper to their calling, and should be found in their characters. The evangelists in their accounts of our Saviour's transfiguration are all of them very particular as to that one circumstance, that *his raiment was white as the light*. This divine splendour of his person was denoted by the splendour of the high priest's garments, which are said to have been appointed *for glory and for beauty;* such beauty as is applied in the Psalms to its proper sense, *the beauty of holiness* §. This clothing of light was proper to an earthly high priest, only in consideration of his being a representative of that divine intercessor,

* Exodus xxviii. 2. † Psalm cxxxii. 9. ‡ Rev. xix. 8.
§ Psalm xcvi. 9.

who was to be *the glory* as well as the priest of his people Israel.

Such dignity hath God been pleased to grant to his ministers; not for their own sakes, but from their relation to Jesus Christ. As the Jews shewed all reverence to their high priest, much more ought we to ours, and to all that act in his name, for his sake: and they who think meanly of the priesthood, or speak of it with contempt, as some do of malice, and some of ignorance, shall one day see heaven and earth fly away from before the face of a priest.

When the name of a priest is applied to Christ in the New Testament, we understand the term in a figurative sense, and go to the law for its literal meaning; because Christ did not serve at the altar, nor officiate in the temple, nor was of the family of the priesthood. Whereas in truth, he was the original, and they of the law were figures of him. Had it not been for his priesthood fore-ordained of God, there never had been such a thing as a priest in the world. Why was one man appointed to intercede for another? Where can be the sense and reason of it? For why cannot that man as well intercede for himself? It was to shew that there should be in the fulness of time one to intercede effectually for all: and that this great intercessor should be *taken from among men*, like the other priests who were before him: this is the true reason why some men in preference to others were admitted to intercede; though still on a level with the rest, and obliged to offer sacrifices *for their own sins*.

In one respect we are to this day in the state of the Jewish people. They could not offer their own sacrifices; they were to bring them to the priest and he was to offer them. So cannot we now offer up our prayers and praises to God but by Jesus Christ; and

so the apostle applies the case for us; *by him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* Yea and even under the law, while the earthly high priest served, as a shadow, to present the offerings of the people to God, it was understood by the prophets that he was no more than a shadow, and that there was another divine priest to whom the office properly belonged. For who is he that saith in the 16th Psalm, *their drink offerings of blood will I not offer nor make mention of their names within my lips?* David was no priest; and though he was a king, he could offer no sacrifice either for himself or for others. The passage refers to the impure and unsanctified offerings of the heathens who went *after other gods;* yet he, who refuses to offer these, must be the person whose office it is to present to God, as the common intercessor, the offerings of all men: for the speaker here is the same as in the 10th verse, where the same priest saith, *thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption;* which words are expressly said to have been spoken of the resurrection of Christ: as the next words are of his exaltation. —*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore:* for certainly this place at the right hand of God is the place of the Son of God, which he assumed when he ascended into heaven: this was the *joy* which the prophets and the Psalms had *set before him,* for which he endured the cross and despised the shame of it. This is the priest who saith all these things: it was therefore declared to those who were under the law, that there was another high priest, above him that ministered in the tabernacle or temple, by whose invisible ministration, the offerings of men

were to be presented and made acceptable to God. So plain and direct is the doctrine of this psalm, that St. Peter, by an application of it to the person of Christ, converted three thousand souls at once.

As the words of the apostle above mentioned, relating to the priesthood of Christ, are spoken with reference to the figures and prophecies of the old testament, it must have been declared therein that we should have a priest *higher than the heavens*: for that such an one *became us*, inasmuch as every other would have fallen short of what the scripture hath testified by prophetical signs and prophetical words: some of which I am now to set before you. Melchizedec was a sign of the priesthood of Christ; being not only *priest of the most high God*, but also a *king*, a person of royal majesty, and in dignity superior to the greatest man upon earth, because he blessed the father of the faithful; and *the less is blessed of the greater*. It follows therefore from this character of Melchizedec, that to the holiness of the priesthood there should be added in the person of Christ the majesty of a king; even of such a king as should have a throne in heaven itself. For thus is this priest spoken of in the 110th psalm: *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand*: and in the subsequent verses of the psalm the same person is spoken unto as *a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec*: therefore the scripture, under the old covenant, gave notice of a priest who should *sit at the right hand* of God; and should of consequence be *higher than the heavens*. The argument from this psalm is very clear; but what the scripture hath said on the character and priesthood of Melchizedec is so important, and withal so mysterious, that the apostle hath a long and critical discourse upon it in the epistle to the Hebrews; of which he himself

gives us this as the sum: *we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

The intercession of Christ as a priest in heaven was signified yearly in the service of the tabernacle, when the high priest went on the great day of atonement into the inner tabernacle, or holy of holies, with the blood of a sacrifice. From whence the same apostle argues, that Christ as our high priest should enter, not into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us* *. The holy place of the tabernacle is applied in the same manner to the residence of God in the invisible heavens in the 24th psalm: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his *holy place? he that hath clean hands,* &c. this may allude to the ceremony prescribed, for the high priest to wash himself with water † before he entered the holy place. Then follows a description of the majestic ascension and entrance of the *king of glory* into the *everlasting doors* of the heavenly place; and this psalm is accordingly appointed by the church as one of the proper psalms for the feast of the ascension. A sign was given that the heavenly places were opened, for himself first, and for all believers after him, in consequence of his overcoming the sharpness of death. The vail of the temple, by which the holy place was separated from the worldly sanctuary, or first tabernacle, was rent miraculously at his crucifixion, and that figure of the heaven was laid open, into which none but the high priest might enter: which circumstance is thus applied for us in the epistle to the Hebrews: *having*

* Heb. ix. 24. † See Lev. xvi. 4.

therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water *. These last words allude, as the correspondent ones before in the 24th psalm, to the custom of the high priest washing his flesh with water, before he was permitted to enter into the holy place: which ceremony is applied in the psalm to the purity of the great high priest himself; but in the language of the apostle with equal propriety to all Christians, who are to partake of the benefits of his ministration in heaven, and to follow a pure high priest with purity of conscience.

Another rite pertaining to the priesthood, and of great signification in the scripture, is that of the high priest's consecration with the anointing oil: a sign of grace and authority from the spirit of God: and in virtue of this anointing, the high priest had power to heal the leprosy and other unclean diseases †, that the parties so cleansed might be fit to attend upon the service of the sanctuary, for which they were disqualified and in a state of excommunication ‡, so long as their uncleanness lasted. Thus in the new testament we read, that Jesus was *anointed* of God with the Holy Ghost and with power; in consequence of which he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him §. A leper, who had faith in his power, came and worshipped him, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst*

* Heb. x. 22, &c. † Lev. xiv. 11. ‡ Lev. xv. 31. § Acts x. 38.

make me clean. When this man was cleansed of his leprosy, he was commanded to shew himself to the priest, and to make the accustomed offering, for a *testimony unto them:* and as it was the office of the priest to cure this disease, this cure was a legal proof and testimony to the priesthood of the time, that there was a greater than themselves amongst them; who, though not literally anointed to the ministry, had the true anointing from the spirit of God, which had descended upon him after his baptism; and who should supersede them in their office; but it doth not appear what inference they made from the case.

As the gift of the spirit was communicated at the anointing of the high priest, and the spirit is the author of love and unity to the church, who are to *preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace:* we find a beautiful allusion, with an application of this rite to its mystical sense, in the 133rd psalm: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his garments.* It was always an undoubted truth in every state of the church, that unity is from the spirit of God; beginning in those of superior authority, and spreading itself with a progress of descent from the highest to the lowest members of the community: but the thing is most evident to us under the gospel; who are taught, that the church is the body of Christ; that he himself is the head of it; and that the divine spirit first shed upon him, is from thence diffused to all orders of Christians, to the least and lowest members of the church.

The scripture has numberless other references to the sacrifices and priesthood of the law, more than the

plan of these lectures will admit: for I do not undertake to explain *all* that is referred to in the law: my meaning is to shew, by several examples, in what manner the scripture itself applies the institutions of the law; and by so doing, I put a light into the hands of those who read the bible, with which they may go farther, and examine things for themselves. Yet, among the offerings of the tabernacle and temple, there are two more for which I shall have room in this discourse; I mean the *first fruits* and the *burning of incense.*

In 1 Cor. xv. Christ, as risen from the dead, is called the *first fruits; but now,* saith St. Paul, *is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* From the term thus applied he confirms and opens in a wonderful manner, the doctrine of the Resurrection; and therefore it is proper we should have a right understanding of it. When the harvest was ripe, and ready for the sickle, a first sheaf was reaped and carried into the temple, where the priest waved it before the Lord to be accepted; and till this was done, the rest of the harvest was not sanctified to the use of the people, nor had they any right to partake of it.

The use the apostle makes of this is very extensive. In the first place, the growing of grain from the earth where it was buried, is an exact image of the resurrection of the body; for as the one is *sown,* so is the other, and neither is *quickened,* except it first die and be buried.—Then the whole harvest, from its relation to the first fruits, explains and ensures the order of our resurrection. For, is the sheaf of the first fruits reaped? Then is the whole harvest ready. Is Christ risen from the dead? Then shall all rise in like manner. Is he accepted of God as an holy offering,

and lifted up in his heavenly sanctuary? Then shall every sheaf that has grown up with him be taken from the earth and sanctified in its proper order; *Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

If there seems any impropriety in making Christ the first fruits, when we know that others were raised to life before him; as the Shunamite's son by Elisha, and Lazarus by Christ himself: it is to be observed, that they were *raised;* he only *rose* from the dead by his own power, as the grain springeth from the ground of itself.—Besides, though they were raised, they died again; but Christ *being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him:* He was the *first* who rose to *life eternal.* Nothing followed to mankind from the resurrection of others; but he sanctified the harvest of the whole field, and had the *efficacy* as well as the appearance of the *first-fruits.*

Saint Paul in his apology before King Agrippa pleaded in defence of his doctrine, that he said none other things than *those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come;* that *Christ should suffer* *, *and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.* Now these things are no where said by Moses in the letter; therefore they were foretold figuratively and in the spirit. Christ, according to the doctrine of Moses, was to *suffer* in the *Passover,* and to *rise again* in the *first fruits* of the harvest. And as this assertion of the Apostle shews us the style and manner in which Moses preached the Gospel, it is of great importance to us in our present enquiry.

The other offering which I proposed to speak of,

* Acts xxvi. 22.

is that of the daily *incense*. Morning and evening it was to be offered up upon an altar of gold, where no bloody sacrifice was to come *. This offering the Psalmist refers to in his devotions, and explains its meaning by his application of it: *Let my prayer be set forth in thy sight as the incense*. As the smoke and odour of this offering was wafted into the holy place, close by the veil of which stood the altar of incense; so do the prayers of the faithful ascend upwards, and find admission into the highest heaven. *Cornelius*, said the angel, *thy prayers are come up for a memorial before God* †. The prayer of faith is acceptable to God, as the fragrance of incense is agreeable to the senses of man: and as the incense was offered twice a day, in the morning and evening, the spirit of this service is to be kept up at those times throughout all generations. The prophet Malachi foretold that it should be observed throughout the world: *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to my name* ‡. In the Revelation we hear of this incense as now actually carried up and presented in heaven: where the *elders fall down before the Lamb with golden vials in their hands, filled with odours* (of incense) *which are the prayers of saints* §. Happy are they who fulfil this service; and at the rising and going down of the sun send up this offering to heaven, as all Christians are supposed to do, at least twice in every day. What then are they, and to whom do they belong, who do not pray? What is their incense? Perhaps it is nothing but a faithless murmuring and complaining against the Providence they ought to bless and adore. Perhaps,

* Exodus xxx. 8, 9. † Acts x. 4. ‡ Mal. i. 11. § Rev. v. 8.

they call upon God for curses upon themselves and others; and then their *mouth*, instead of offering incense, is an *open sepulchre*, sending forth the filthy oodurs of death and uncleanness. From this unprofitable and most miserable state, may God deliver all Christian families, who look for any blessing upon themselves and their affairs: may his grace open their lips, and dispose their affections; that they may meet together in peace, and make a morning and an evening sacrifice to that God whose eyes are upon them all the day long; who made them, and redeemed them, and is alone able to save those that call upon him through Jesus Christ.

LECTURE V.

SOME FARTHER EXAMPLES, WHICH SHEW HOW THE LANGUAGE OF THE OTHER PARTS OF THE SCRIPTURE IS BORROWED FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE LAW OF MOSES, AND TO BE INTERPRETED THEREBY.—THE TEMPLE, THE SABBATH, CIRCUMCISION, CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS, *&c.*—THE WONDERFUL TESTIMONY OF THE LAW TO THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST.

NEXT in order to the offerings and the priesthood of the law, is the *place* of divine worship, wherein these services were accomplished, called *the tabernacle;* to which the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament refer us in many figurative passages, for the right understanding of which, we must first enquire what the tabernacle was in itself.

It was a moveable habitation; like a large tent, first erected in the wilderness, when the Israelites were on their pilgrimage to Canaan. It contained two apartments; the first of which was called the *Holy Place,* appointed for the daily services of sacrifice and prayer; beyond which there was an inner apartment, called the *most Holy Place,* in which a service was performed once in a year by the high priest only: and these two apartments were separated by a veil reaching from the top to the bottom. In the most holy place, the presence of God was manifested, and his glory is said on some occasions to have filled the tabernacle: but it was usual for this glory to ap-

pear above or between the cherubims, which were placed here upon the mercy seat which covered the ark; on which account the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews calls them *the cherubims of glory;* and the Psalmist speaks of them as the proper seat of the divine Majesty—*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.**.

There was this remarkable distinction between the two apartments of the tabernacle; that as the one was the place of God's residence, the habitation of his holiness; the other had a conformity with this present world; whence the apostle calls it a *worldly sanctuary,* or world-like sanctuary, that is, a sanctuary resembling this visible world; as must indeed be evident to those who consider what relation it bore to the other sanctuary: how it was distinguished in its use from the most holy place which was the habitation of God; and how it was furnished with lights, as the visible heavens are, the chief of which are seven in number, and the lights of the tabernacle were made to answer them. From this known relation between the visible world and the sanctuary, the heavens are called the *tabernacle* of the *sun;* the whole world itself, and the firmament of heaven, with its glorious furniture, being one great tabernacle, comprehending the luminaries of the day and night, represented in figure by the lamps of the tabernacle. *Josephus,* in his Jewish Antiquities, has preserved a tradition, that this was the design of them, and that they had respect to the system of the

* If the reader wishes to enquire into the form and design of the Cherubim, more particularly than the intention of these Lectures will permit me to do, as being designed for general use, I must refer him to the last edition of Mr. *Parkhurst's* Hebrew Lexicon; the most useful work, without exception, that has ever been published on the Literature or Philology of the sacred Language.

heavens *. And this alliance between the furniture of the tabernacle and the furniture of the heavens, gives us a grand idea of the visible world; the inhabitants of which are all to consider themselves as comprehended in one great sanctuary, where the first and best employment (by necessary inference) is the service of that God who has brought them into it. Therefore the indevout mind, which is either ignorant or insensible of this doctrine of a sacred alliance and communion betwixt God and his creatures, is a poor intruder into the great temple of the world; on whom we ought to look as we should upon the rude savage, who should come staring into a Christian church in the time of divine service, without understanding what the nature of the place is, and how the people are employed.

From this description of the tabernacle we must proceed to the figurative acceptation of it: for that it actually was a figure, and had respect to things beyond itself, is shewn by the reasoning of St. *Paul* throughout the Epistle to the *Hebrews;* who there speaks of a *true tabernacle*, of a nature superior to that of the law, but signified and shadowed out by it. The same appears from the words spoken to Moses, *see thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount:* which direction was preserved, and is quoted in the new testament twice, to teach us, that the visible tabernacle was nothing more than a *copy* from an *heavenly original*, which came down from God out of heaven (like the *New Jerusalem* in the Revelation) and was exhibited to

* The Emperor *Numa* placed a sacred fire in his temple, with the like allusion to the fire of the heavens; *focum Vestæ virginibus colendum dedit, ut ad* similitudinem cœlestium siderum *custos imperii flamma vigilaret.* Flor. Hist. 1.

Moses in a vision on the mount. Hence the apostle argues for a prophetic relation to heavenly things in the earthly tabernacle. As we hear of a *Jerusalem that is above*, corresponding to the earthly Jerusalem; so was there always understood to be a heavenly tabernacle; the eternal residence of God, as the tabernacle below was his temporary residence, while his presence was with Moses and the Jews. This heavenly original must be understood, where the Psalmist speaks of the dwelling of the righteous man in *the secret place of the most High, under the shadow of the Almighty*, covering him with his wings, as the cherubim of glory are said to spread forth their wings in the secret place of the earthly sanctuary *. So where he saith in the 15th psalm, *Who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill?* No man can be so ignorant as to think that the godly were to expect their rest and reward in a tabernacle, which had no existence after the days of David. The words must refer to that other tabernacle spoken of by Isaiah, a *tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall be removed* †. As there is an eternal *throne of David* on which the Messiah sits and reigns *for ever* ‡; so is there an eternal tabernacle, in which he is exalted as the head and ruler in his church; and both are united on another occasion.—*In mercy shall the throne be established, and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment and hasting righteousness*; which words cannot be understood of the literal tabernacle, though they refer to the *mercy-seat* in the most holy place, over which God appeared enthroned in glory above the cherubim;

* Psalm xci. 1. 4. † Isaiah xxxiii. 20. ‡ Luke i. 32.

with which in Ezekiel's vision of them, there was a likeness of a throne, with the appearance of a man upon it; and the whole together is called *the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord* *: whence we collect, that what Ezekiel saw was a visionary appearance of that seat of glory in the holy place, which was the instituted likeness of the seat of the divine glory in the heavens. And in a like vision of Isaiah, the throne of God, and the display of his glory, is still present in his temple: *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple* †. So, where the same prophet saith, *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory* ‡; the words *habitation* and *holiness* and *glory* all refer to the earthly sanctuary as a pattern of the heavenly.

The tabernacle was also a figure of the church of Christ: and therefore the renovation and establishment of the church amongst the Gentiles by the preaching of the gospel, is described under the idea of a restoration of the tabernacle which had ceased from the time of David. The prophet *Amos* speaks of this gathering of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, as into the tabernacle taken in this new sense; and St. James made the proper application of it, when the great question was debated concerning the reception of the heathens. *To this,* says he, *agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down—that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called* §. To the same effect St. Stephen had observed in his apology to the Jews, that the tabernacle had originally *been brought in with Jesus into the possession of the*

* Ezekiel i. 26. † Isaiah vi. 1. ‡ Ib. lxiii. 15. § Acts xv. 6.

Gentiles; and therefore the church might reasonably go thither again; whereto the preaching of the gospel under the true Jesus should remove and settle it.

The propriety with which the Christian church is signified by this name, is too plain to be enlarged upon; inasmuch as we have already seen, that all things are there done in spirit and in truth, which were done in figure in the tabernacle of the law.

But the tabernacle, as well as the temple, is farther applied as a figure of the body of Christ; and this in a passage not open to common observation. *The word,* saith St. John, *was made flesh and* dwelt *amongst us;* where the true sense of the original is, *he tabernacled amongst us:* and then it is added, *and we beheld his glory;* for where the true tabernacle is, there must be also the glory of it. Here then we have the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, signified by the dwelling of God's presence in the tabernacle; than which there can be no higher proof of his divinity to those that understand the thing in this light. As the glory of the Lord was once present in the tabernacle, so it is said with reference to the same, that in him dwelt *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Well therefore might he say of his body, *destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again;* for it was both a tabernacle and temple in a stricter sense than had ever been before; the Godhead had occasionally dwelt in the buildings made with hands: but with him it abode continually. The use our Saviour made of this term amounted to an assertion of his Godhead to the Jews; but as the Jews did not then understand the sense of his expression, so are many Christians as blind to it at this day.

After the pattern of Christ, and according to their proper measure, all Christians have the presence of God abiding within them; whence their bodies also are the *temples of the Holy Ghost;* from which consideration they are instructed to dedicate them, to the service of God; for that is certainly one use of a temple; and not to defile them, for that is sacrilege. And the subject gives them this consolation, that *though their earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved,* he who raised up the tabernacle of David from its ruins to a more glorious state in the Gentile world, and raised up the temple of Christ's body which the Jews destroyed, shall in like manner quicken our mortal bodies by the spirit that dwelleth in us, and give us *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

It was observed above, that the *tabernacle of David* is a figurative term for the Christian church as the mystical body of Christ: we shall likewise find, that the blessings and privileges of the Christian society or assembly of Christian people do all correspond with the œconomy of the congregation of Israel, and are described in terms borrowed from the law; of which the following example in the epistle to the Hebrews will be sufficient, where the apostle says—*Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* Every Christian is to conceive what his own state is, by looking back to the privileges of the church of old. He is come to

mount Zion, to a situation exalted above the world; a mountain chosen and favoured of God, blessed with the dew of heavenly grace, and inheriting the promise of eternal life; even to that holy hill, on which Christ is established as King against all the opposition of the world below. It is the new Jerusalem, because it is ordained to be, as that city was of old, at unity with itself, and a principle of unity to all the land; where all the tribes of the earth unite in one religion, as the tribes of Israel assembled to worship at Jerusalem. The cities of the neighbouring nations were dedicated to some tutelary idol; Jerusalem alone to the true and living God; so now is the same God connected with the Christian city and with that only; and all the company of heaven, innumerable as they are, who assisted at the delivery of the law, are with him. As the first-born of Israel, who had the right of inheritance, were redeemed and written down by name; so are all the children of the Christian society enrolled in heaven as the first-born of God, and *the book of life* in which they are written answers to the register of the church of Israel. We are come to God the *Judge* of all, because we are taken out of the world of the ungodly, who are aliens, to be subject to his laws, and consequently to be under his government. It is true that all the world are under the authority of God; but then all are not related to him as citizens and subjects. In this respect, God was said to be nigher to the Jews than to any nation upon earth, because he was with them as their judge and protector. We have our Jesus, as they had their Moses; both of them mediators, to stand between God and the people. The Hebrews were not permitted to draw near to God to treat for themselves on pain of death; but Moses was to be

between them, as Christ is now betwixt us and God, and no man can come to the Father but by him: and in his blood we have remission, as all things were purified under the law, and nothing accepted or sanctified without the blood of sprinkling; which speaketh better things than that of Abel; for the blood of Abel cried for vengeance, this for mercy and pardon.

Thus is our society on like terms with theirs in every respect: and to these particulars I may add, that as the congregation of Israel on great and solemn occasions was called together by the sound of a trumpet, so shall the great assembly of all nations, all the tribes of the earth, and we ourselves among the rest, be summoned after the same form: *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised:* and then we shall see with our eyes what that great society is, in the which we now live by faith.

There are many particular institutions remaining, some of a religious, some of a moral, and others of a civil nature; a few of the most useful of which I must select, and shew how the scripture has applied them.

The sabbath, which succeeds the labours of the week, appears to have been appointed from the beginning as a perpetual sign, a *sign for ever* *, of that happy *Rest* which the servants of God are to expect after the *labours* of this life. For thus the apostle hath reasoned about it; that being called the *Rest of God*, it cannot be of an earthly, but must be of an heavenly nature; for God doth not rest upon earth where men labour. He shews that the true rest promised to the faithful was not the sabbath that was

* Exodus xxxi. 17.

appointed after God had finished his works; nor yet the state of rest so called, in the land of Canaan; because the promise is still suspended, and repeated again in the time of David: whence he concludes that it was a rest never yet fulfilled in this life, but still *remaining for the people of God*, and into which the faithful enter when they die in the Lord and *rest from their labours*. I say no more of this here, because I have considered the subject more at large in my Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, to which it properly belongs.

Circumcision was that rite of the law by which the Israelites were taken into God's covenant; and (in the spirit of it) was the same as baptism among Christians. For as the form of baptism expresses the putting away of sin; circumcision was another form to the same effect. The scripture speaks of a *circumcision made without hands*, of which that made with hands was no more than an outward sign, which denoted *the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh* *, and becoming a new creature; which is the sense of our baptism. Of this inward and spiritual grace of circumcision the apostle speaks expressly in another place; *he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter* †. Some may suppose that this spiritual application of circumcision, as a sacrament, was invented after the preaching of the gospel, when the veil was taken from the law: but this doctrine was only inforced to those who had it before, and had departed from the sense of their own law: for thus did Moses instruct

* Col. ii. 11. † Rom. ii. 28.

the Jews, that there is a *foreskin of the heart* which was to be *circumcised* in a moral or spiritual way, before they could be accepted as the servants of God; and again, that the Lord would *circumcise their heart, to love him with all their heart, and with all their soul* *; which was the same as to say, that he would give them what circumcision signified, making them Jews inwardly, and giving them the inward grace with the outward sign: without which, the letter of baptism avails no more now than the letter of circumcision did then: and we may say of the one as it is said of the other, "He is not a Christian which is "one outwardly, and baptism is *not the putting away* "*the filth of the flesh* by washing with water, but *the* "*answer of a good conscience towards God* †."

Nearly allied to this was the precept which forbad them to touch any dead carcase; and, in case of any such accident, enjoined a religious purification by water. Here apply the general rule, *he is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, and then you will understand, that outward defilement was not the thing to be feared, but the defilement of the mind, lest *evil communications* should *corrupt good manners*. This precept in its moral acceptation teaches that there is a certain relation between *death*, and *sin*, and *pollution*. For why do men die but for their sin? and also, that he who converses with such as are under the death of sin, that is, dead in spirit, dead to faith and holiness, will be defiled by their company, and will want washing; till which he will be unfit for the service of God. Thus the apostle himself explains the case; that as those who were unclean by touching a dead body, were purified with a lye made of the ashes of a

* Deut. x. 16. and xxx. 6. † 1 Pet. iii. 21.

sacrifice, so are our consciences to be purged from *dead works* to serve the living God *.

Another prohibition of the same nature is referred to for a like purpose, and the apostle thereby warns the Christians to avoid the society of the heathens; speaking in such terms as nothing but the law of Moses can truly explain: *be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*; borrowing his expression from that law which forbad the Jews to *plough with an ox and an ass together*, that is, with a clean and an unclean beast, between whom as there is no alliance of nature, they were not to be mismatched under the same yoke. This the apostle has applied to its true sense, in those words, *be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers* †. Yet this law, on a proper occasion, was to be superseded, when the Jew and Gentile were both to join in the work of the gospel: which consideration explains that difficult passage in the prophet Isaiah—*Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.*

On another occasion the same apostle shews us, that a law which seems to make provision for beasts, was intended for the benefit of God's ministers, and is to be so applied. The law saith, *thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.* Here, to prevent misunderstandings, the apostle asks a question, *Doth God take care for oxen?* Was his divine and holy law made for beasts? certainly not: but, for men; *for our sakes no doubt this was written* ‡. Although the words were spoken of beasts, the sense relates only to men; the precept being wholly intended to teach under a figure (as the law taught every

* Compare Heb. ix. 13, 14, with Numb. xix. 11, &c.

† 2 Cor. vi. 14 ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 9, &c.

thing else) that the ministers of God's word should be maintained out of the profits and offerings of the Church in which they serve, as the ox at the threshing-floor is justly permitted to take advantage of his labour, and to partake of the corn while he is treading it out for the use of man. Every labourer, whether he be an ox or a man, is worthy of his hire; and if it is unjust and unmerciful to defraud a beast of his dues, it must be something much worse to invade the rights of the ministers of God's church. The precept therefore is stronger in its reason than if it had been delivered in plain words; yet it is to be questioned whether the reason of the thing, in any form, will prevail with all minds. Some there are in all countries who, though they would not defraud their oxen, would be glad to muzzle every Christian minister; and that in more senses than one; they would not only be glad to see him deprived of the rights of his ministry, but be better pleased if they could put a muzzle upon the ministry itself, and stop the offence of Christian preaching. But this they will never be able to do, till God shall be provoked to forsake the ministry who have first forsaken him; and then the weakest hand that is lifted up may prevail against them.

There are two very remarkable prophecies, the one relating to the infidelity of the Jewish church, the other to the person of the Messiah, which are the last I shall take notice of, both delivered in the figurative language of the municipal laws of the Jews.

If a woman was suspected to be an adultress by a husband who was jealous of her, and there was no proof, she was to present herself before the priest and stand the trial of a water ordeal: *a bitter water which caused the curse* was to be offered to her; and when

the curses were pronounced conditionally upon her supposed guilt, she was to venture the consequences, and say, Amen. The priest was to write down the form of the curses against her in a book, and to blot them out with the bitter water if she proved to be innocent; if not, they were then to remain there upon record against her. If she was actually defiled, this water was to go into her bowels and take effect upon her body in a fearful manner, and she was to be *a curse among the people* *.

This institution explains some very difficult passages in the 109th Psalm, that prophecy of God's judgment against the apostate Jewish church: on whom, as upon a guilty adultress against a jealous God, denying her sin, and defying the divine vengeance, the curse was to take effect as against a woman in the law. The psalm is worded as if it were meant of some single wicked person, and it is accordingly applied to the reprobation of Judas; but other passages, and the use made of them by the inspired writers, shew that it must be extended to the Jewish church at large, of which Judas, in his name, and his sin, and his punishment, was no more than a leader and an example. Here then it is said, *when he shall be judged let him be condemned;* when he is put to the trial, let him be found guilty: and *let his prayer be turned into sin;* let it be as that offering which *bringeth iniquity to remembrance,* without oil or incense to recommend it for acceptance: *let not the sin of his mother be blotted out,* but stand upon record as the curses against the sin of the adultress, which the water was not to take away: *As he loved cursing so let it come unto him—let it come into his bowels like*

* See Numb. v. 12, &c.

water, even like that bitter water which descended with a curse into the bowels of the guilty woman. As she exposed herself in form to the curse, and said, Amen, to all the terms of it; so did the Jews challenge the curse of heaven, which accordingly took place on them and their posterity.

The civil institution, applied to the person of the Messiah, is that concerning the Hebrew servant, who having served six years, was to go free in the sabbatical year, if he chose to depart; but if he was content with his service, and willing to continue in it, he was to be brought before the Judges, and to be fastened to the door, or the post of the door, by an awl driven through his ear, as a sign of his consent, and he was to serve his master for ever *.

Under an allusion to this example, the obedience of Christ in the flesh is foretold and illustrated in the Psalms; and a wonderful example it is: for here we are to observe, that, upon this occasion, no sacrifice nor offering is appointed; nothing passes but the obedience of a willing servant: therefore in the application of it to Christ, the prophet says, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, but mine ears hast thou opened—burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required; then said I, lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God.* In the epistle to the Hebrews, the passage as cited by the apostle, and applied to the obedience and death of Christ, stands thus; *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.* The sense is the same in both, though the words are different. The apostle after the Greek version says, *a body hast thou prepared me;* that is, a body wherein

* Exod. xxi. 6.

to suffer and be obedient unto death: the psalm says, *mine ears hast thou pierced*: for the word is the same as in the 22nd psalm, *they pierced my hands and feet*; and here the piercing of the ear, the symbol of obedience, was a sign of his suffering in that body which should be prepared for him. All this being a reference to the custom observed under the law toward the obedient servant, that custom was a standing testimony in the volume of the book of Moses, that the Messiah, taking the form of a servant, should offer himself freely to do the will of God for our salvation; and in consequence of this determination, should be pierced in the body, as the willing servant was bored through to the post of the door; the place where the blood of the passover was sprinkled with the same signification once every year.

In this and the preceding lecture I have endeavoured to shew, as my plan requires, how the language of the other parts of scripture is borrowed from the language of the law, and is to be interpreted thereby. To what has been said, give me leave to add a few general observations on the nature and design of the law of Moses.

St. *Paul* asks the question; *wherefore then serveth the law?* To which he gives this answer; *it was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made* *. The expectation of the seed first promised in paradise, and afterwards to Abraham, was the sum and substance of the patriarchal faith; and all the earliest institutions of priesthood and sacrifice were intended to keep up this expectation. But when the perverseness of men had changed and corrupted the primitive institutions for the base pur-

* Galatians iii. 19.

poses of idolatry and the worship of false Gods, it became necessary on account of these frequent transgressions to add a written law, with a stated form of positive services, never to be altered nor departed from; and all of them descriptive of the salvation which was to be effected by the promised seed; whence you are not to wonder, that in him they all meet and find their interpretation.

They who were bound to the observation of the law, were thereby separated of necessity from the world; and, as St. Paul very strongly expresses it, *shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed**; confined to a set of ceremonies and services, under which it was in a manner impracticable for them to evade the objects of their faith, when they should be revealed in their true form. Not only the substance of what was expected, but all the particulars and circumstantials had been acted over in figure for ages together: and so the law was *a schoolmaster unto Christ*; preparing those who were under it for the reception of the gospel, and as it were forcing them upon it, if men could on that principle be reconciled to truth.

When the gospel appeared, the Jew should have reasoned thus with himself. Do they say Jesus died for our redemption? So did the paschal lamb die to redeem our whole nation in Egypt. Did he ascend afterwards into heaven? So did our high priest go yearly into the most holy place, carrying thither the blood of a sacrifice slain in the worldly sanctuary. Is there no remission of sin without shedding of blood? —There certainly was none under the law. Has Jesus appointed a baptism with water? So had our law its

* Galatians v. 23.

purifications for the washing away of uncleanness. Is the partition we have so diligently kept up between ourselves and the Heathens to be broken down at last, and is the true religion to be carried out amongst all nations? So was our tabernacle brought from the solitary wilderness under Joshua, whom the Greeks call *Jesus*, into the *possession of the Gentiles*. Numberless other questions might be asked, shocking to the prejudices of a Jew, which would bring their own answers with them out of the law of Moses: and such was the use the Jew ought to have made of it.

From the various applications of particular passages from the law, previous to the revelation of the gospel, it appears that the law was in itself a spiritual as well as a figurative system, for the forming of the heart, and the purifying of the mind; yet conveying its precepts in parables and signs which wanted an interpretation: and that interpretation is occasionally dropped in so many parts of the scripture, especially in the Psalms, that the prophets and masters of Israel appear to have understood the law in a spiritual sense. If the bulk of the people did not understand it so, we must not impute this to any uncertainty or obscurity in Moses and the prophets, but to that carnal affection which naturally chuses the form of religion without the spirit of it. Their pride, their affectation of false wisdom, their avarice, their adultery, blinded them, and made them as averse, to the sense of a miracle wrought before their eyes, as to the sense of the darkest verse in the Pentateuch. The world always has been, and now is, to those that are shut up under its laws, a schoolmaster to turn men away from Christ; and a conceited worldly minded Christian, proud of the powers of reason without grace, is at this hour as blind to the spirit of the gospel as the Jew

ever was to that of the law. For ignorance of the true *spirit* of Christianity, and the *design* of its doctrines, I would match the modern philosophising Socinian with the blindest Jew: for the one has made the gospel as void as the other made the law. Read the writings of some whose books have made a great noise in the present century, and you will know no more of the Christian church and the Christian sacraments, than the wandering Jew, who now travels about to cheat Christians with his wares, knows of the priesthood and sacrifices in the books of Moses.

The law is of use to us Christians for the illustration of the new testament, whose language and mysteries are so founded upon it, that the language of the gospels and epistles is unintelligible without a particular attention to the law; and in proportion as our knowledge of it encreases, our faith will grow stronger. Thus the law serves for evidence both to the Jew and Gentile; and the same schoolmaster, which should have brought them to Christ, will keep us with him. For, did the apostle in his preaching *say nothing but what Moses had said?* And did the gospel teach nothing but what the law had *signified* long before? Then must the gospel be that very salvation, which was known to God from the beginning, and in reserve to be made manifest to the world in the latter days.

This argument, clear and irresistible as it certainly is, will one day appear to the Jews as it does to us, when the scales of blindness shall fall from their eyes: and then it may be thought the greatest wonder of all, that they who had the old testament in their hands for eighteen hundred years, should never have seen the use of it before.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE FIGURES OF THE SCRIPTURES WHICH ARE BORROWED FROM THE EVENTS OF THE SACRED HISTORY.

THE Scripture is the authentic history of God's Providence ever since man had a being; and in the conduct of God's Providence toward man, there is an uniformity of design which has proceeded according to the same laws of eternal justice and wisdom in all ages of the world: from which consideration it follows, that what God did in times past was an earnest, a pattern, and a sign, of what he might be expected to do in times to come. The godly were delivered, the wicked punished, the proud abased, the humble exalted, under like circumstances and after like forms at different periods of time. Thus it hath been, and thus it will be: therefore things past are referred to in the scriptures as figures of things to come, and so the history of the bible becomes a chain of prophecy, and is actually applied as such by the scripture itself; as we shall see from a variety of examples.

I reckon two sorts of historical figures, the one general, the other particular; the former being references to the history of places, and of such events as related to a people at large, or even to the whole world; the latter referring us to the lives, actions, sufferings and successes of individual persons. Thus the saints of old were prophetical in their actions as

well as in their words: of which some striking examples will occur to us as we proceed.

One of the most early and memorable events of the Scripture is that of the destruction of the world by the Flood; from which Noah and his family were saved in an Ark, supported by those same waters which destroyed the world of the ungodly. This history of the Salvation of Noah is applied by St. *Peter* as a *figure* of that *Salvation* which we now obtain as the *family* of Jesus Christ in the Ark of the *Church* by the *waters* of *Baptism: the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. A like figure whereunto, even Baptism doth now save us by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ**. By which it is to be understood, that the salvation of Christians by Jesus Christ, and the salvation of Noah's family, are two events of the like form and figure; the former a sign of the latter. And a wonderful sign it was, if we look into the particulars. Here was a judgment which extended to a whole world; a condemnation that passed upon all, except those who were of the family of Noah: as the wrath of God and a future judgment upon sin, to be executed by fire, is denounced against all mankind, except those who shall belong to the family of Jesus Christ. As an ark was prepared by Noah, so hath Christ prepared his Church, to conduct us in safety through the waves of trouble and the perils of the world, in which so many are lost. And as the waters of the flood carried Noah and his family into a new world after the old was drowned; so do the waters of baptism carry us into a new state with Jesus

* 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

Christ, who passed over the waves of death and is risen from the dead. And this practical inference is to be made in favour of the ordinance of the Church; that as the ark could not be saved but by water, so must all the Church of Christ be baptized. So plainly doth the whole figure speak the doctrine of the Christian Salvation, that it is applied for instruction in the office of baptism, where we are taught to pray that the child *may be received into the Ark of Christ's Church,* and therein *pass through the waves of this troublesome world.* Many other particulars belonging to this figure will explain themselves when the general sense of the figure is understood; and therefore I need pursue it no further.

The confusion of tongues, with the dispersion of the nations, is another great event, which comes next in order of time, and ought not to be unnoticed, because it was reversed when all the nations, so divided at Babel, were *gathered together in one* in Christ Jesus, to be a *holy nation,* a *peculiar people;* and the different languages which arose at Babel were all united in the tongues of the first preachers of the Gospel on the day of Pentecost. God being the fountain of truth and author of peace, his religion makes itself intelligible to all; but where there is disobedience of mind and wickedness of principle, there do confusion and division ensue, as in the first religious rebellion at Babel. Against such people, this judgment is denounced by the Psalmist; *destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city* *. The city of God is at unity with itself; but the city of the adversary, like *Babel,* the *Mother of Harlots,* is the citadel of dis-

* Psalm lv. 9.

pute and division. The false wisdom of this world begins and ends (if error has any end) with disputation and opposition. We see an example of this in the multitude of gods, and the many strange rites of worship, with the endless *oppositions of science falsely so called*, which arose among the sects of the heathen philosophers when the Greek and Roman learning flourished: and (to come nearer our own times) in the multitude of sectaries and heresies which have arisen since the Reformation, in this country, amongst those who paid no regard to the doctrines and discipline of the primitive Church. In a word, all those who set up themselves, and affect high things, in opposition to the wisdom of God, are cursed with confusion; and there is no greater evidence of their error, than that they are never able to speak the same language.

After the events of the Flood, and the dispersion at Babel, the destruction of *Sodom* is to be understood as a sign or prophetic figure of the future destruction of the world by fire, together with the deliverance of the faithful after the example of Lot. This history is referred to in the 11th Psalm, where the wicked are threatened with *fire and brimstone* to be *rained* upon them *from the Lord*, as formerly upon Sodom. St. *Jude* in his Epistle warns us that *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* are *set forth for an example* *, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*. And that short admonition of our Saviour, in one of his discourses, *Remember Lot's Wife*, teaches us what we ought to learn from the particulars of the story; that as the world shall be destroyed by fire like Sodom, so a remnant shall be saved by the divine mercy; and

* Jude 7.

that of those who are taken by the hand to follow their deliverer and to *flee from the wrath to come* (which is another allusion to the same event) some shall turn back in their hearts and affections toward this wicked world, and so be *unfit for the kingdom of God:* a circumstance which should be thought upon with fear and trembling: for consider how that *unbelieving soul*, by favouring what was evil, lost all that was good, when it was in her power to escape; as they will not fail to do, who either disbelieve God's judgment upon the world, or think the world undeserving of it, and so take part with the wicked against the justice of God. When times and places are evil, and wickedness prevails with a high hand, the universality and power of corruption is dreadful to think of. When the world was drowned, *few*, that is, *eight Souls* only were saved in the ark; and when Sodom was overthrown, a small remnant only were delivered: whence we are to expect, that *as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed:* confidence in this world and insolent disregard of truth and godliness shall generally prevail, and few indeed shall be left to receive him and escape with him when this Sodom wherein we now live shall be visited.

From a likeness of character in the Jewish people when they became abominable in their sins, the name of *Sodom* is given to their city, and they are threatened with the same fate. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah;* saith the prophet *Isaiah**. The prophet's message is to *Judah* and *Jerusalem;* the rulers and people of which being fallen into great

* Chap. i. 10.

corruption, and strengthening themselves in their wickedness, are addressed by the prophet as the rulers and the people of the abominable Sodom; and he pronounces that they would have met with the judgment of Sodom, but for the sake of the faithful who were still left amongst them, such as Abraham hoped to find when he interceded for Sodom; *except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah* *, that is, as like unto them in their punishment as they were in their manners. And now we shall see the reason why the Evangelist, in the book of Revelation speaks of a *great city*, which *spiritually is called Egypt and Sodom, where our Lord was crucified:* for certainly our Lord was crucified at Jerusalem, and Jerusalem for its apostacy and the judgment that was to overtake it, is called by these names in the prophets: though the passage as it stands in the Revelation may be extended from the example of Jerusalem to the world at large.

I pass over the allegorical history of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, the bond-woman and the free, because it hath been so fully commented upon by the apostle as a figure of the Jewish and Christian covenants. I cannot add to his explanation; and as I should be unwilling to contract it, I rather choose to refer you to the consideration of it, as it stands in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians; and shall proceed to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which is one of the most interesting and edifying histories of Scripture; as it gives us an example of all the dangers, temptations, and deliverances that

* Isaiah i. 9.

can happen in the life of man, during his progress and pilgrimage through the wilderness of this present world. For, in the first place, the translation of the church from Egypt to Canaan is applied in all its circumstances as a pattern of the translation of us Christians from the bondage of sin, to the enjoyment of our freedom in the kingdom of Christ. *Out of Egypt*, saith God by the prophet, *have I called my son* *: a declaration which is as truly verified in every child of God at this day, as when Israel was delivered from Pharaoh, and when the infant Jesus was brought back in safety from Egypt to his own kingdom and people.

Thus the redemption of the people of God from Egypt as a sign of a greater and more universal redemption, is a doctrine with which few readers of the scripture can be unacquainted. The prophets warned the people not to rest in the redemption that was past, but to look for another, and that so much more excellent in its nature, that the former should in a manner be forgotten in comparison of it: *Remember not the former thing, neither consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing*, saith the Lord, *I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert* †. He promised also in one of the psalms, that he would bring his own people *again from the depths of the sea;* which can signify nothing but that universal redemption from sin and death in which all the nations of the world have an equal interest: because this Psalm is not addressed to the Jews, but to all the *kingdoms of the earth;* and is applied by the apostle to the victory of Jesus Christ over death, and to the miraculous gifts bestowed on

* Hosea xi. 1. † Isaiah xlii. 18.

the first preachers of the gospel *: so there can be no doubt as to the intention of the expression in question: it must have the same signification in figure as is expressed in the letter at v. 20.—*to the Lord our God belong the issues from death.*

But the figurative application of the history of the Exodus is much plainer in the new testament. There we see Zacharias, in his prophetical hymn on occasion of the birth of John the Baptist, celebrating the blessings of the Christian redemption in terms borrowed from the past redemption of Israel out of Egypt †. God is said to have *visited* and *redeemed* his people by raising up a Saviour in the house of David—to have performed the *mercy promised to the fathers*, which in the letter of it related to the deliverance from Egypt—to have *saved* us *out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear*, as the Hebrews did, when they were no longer under the power of Pharaoh—and finally to *guide our feet into the way of peace*, as he had before guided his people to a peaceful settlement in the land of Canaan.

If we consider the history of the Exodus more particularly as an example of the circumstances of our redemption by Jesus Christ; the first thing that offers itself is the miserable servitude of the Hebrews under Pharaoh. Such is the natural state of every man who is born a sojourner in the Egypt of this world. As they laboured in clay and mortar, so is every man by nature the slave of vile and earthly affections. As the Hebrews were under Pharaoh, man is under Satan, the proud enemy of the true God, and the irreconcileable and merciless persecutor of

* Compare Psalm lxviii. 18. and Ephesians iv. 8.

† See the hymn called *Benedictus*.

his church. From this miserable state, Christ as the messenger and minister of God is sent from heaven to deliver man, as Moses was raised up for a like purpose, and sent to lead the people out of Egypt; of whose office we shall have a farther prospect when we come to the second sort of historical figures. Look at the order of the redemption from Egypt, and you will find it agree in every particular with the order of the Christian salvation. The people were conducted to the waters of the red sea, where the apostle instructs us *they were all baptized unto Moses**: they were all *saved by water*, as the family of Noah had before been saved at the flood, and as we are saved now. It doth not appear to us how they could have been saved from Pharaoh, but by the interposition of the waters of the sea. Here their salvation began, and the power of their adversary ended: and we know that Satan has not that sovereignty over baptized Christians as he has over men in the state of nature. After baptism a Christian is no longer the subject of that Tyrant, but the child of God, who undertakes thenceforth to conduct him through all the trials and dangers of this life to the inheritance promised to the fathers.

We see how man is to be supported in this life, and to what dangers he is exposed in the way of his salvation, if we observe what happened to the Hebrews in their way through the wilderness. *No temptation befalls us but such as is common to man*, and of which their case gives us an example. The things which befell them are not only apposite and applicable to our own case, but St. *Paul* affirms they were purposely ordained by the providence of God to answer this very end: *Now all these things happened*

* 1 Cor. x. 2.

to them for ensamples; (or, as the margin calls them, *types*) and *they are written for our admonition* *. And here we are to note, as the apostle himself does next after their baptism, how they were fed and supported. They might have been carried a short way through a fruitful country to the land of Canaan; but it pleased God to lead them into a wilderness, where there was neither meat nor drink: which made some of them suspect he had carried them there to destroy them: but his design was to teach them the necessity of prayer and faith and dependence upon himself; and blessed are they to whom the Lord now teaches the same lesson under the want of many things. But, in the spirit, this is the case of every man; for we are all brought after our baptism into a barren world, where we find no more to support that life which God promised to his people, than the Hebrews found in the wilderness. Here we *wander* (as the Psalmist figuratively describes the state of man) *hungry and thirsty, our souls fainting within us,* and depending upon God for his daily grace. The people were taught this in the wilderness by receiving their meat from day to day in a miraculous manner from heaven. It was mere *manna,* such as Moses gave, to those who looked no farther than their bodies; and they were consequently soon tired of it; but to those who received it in faith, it was the *bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.* God in all ages has been the giver of that support which is necessary to all men, whether followers of Moses or followers of Christ †: and Hebrews, if they had souls to be saved, could no more live by *bread alone,* than Christians can. God therefore was pleased

* 1 Cor. x. 11. † See John vi. 32.

to take this way of teaching them that they could not: and the apostle seeing his intention, says, *they did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ* *. There is not a more extraordinary sentence in the scripture than this before us—*that rock was Christ.* It is impossible to take the words literally, any more than those which Christ spake of the bread which he brake, and said, *this is my body.* A rock of stone in a desert could not be Christ in the literal sense; and yet it must be so in some sense, because the apostle hath affirmed it. This sense is therefore figurative and spiritual; as the bread, which is broken in the holy communion, is bread to the body, but Christ to the spirit. And as Christ was the invisible fountain of grace to the thirsting Israelites, communicating himself to them by the sacramental waters of a rock, so he still offers himself to us in the same capacity—*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink* †; that is, if any man, sensible of the drought and emptiness of his own nature, thirst after spiritual things, he shall be refreshed with grace, as the thirsty body is refreshed by the waters of a living spring. He discoursed to the same effect with the woman of Samaria by the side of a well to which she came to draw water —*Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.*

But now, as this meat and drink in the wilderness were figures of Christ, so the people in their use of them are ensamples to us. God shewed them, that man is in want of some nourishment which nature and the common course of things cannot give him:

* 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. † John vii. 37.

therefore he fed them with manna *from heaven* and water from a *dry rock*. But many of them took no delight in this spiritual diet. Though they had seen the wonders of the Red Sea, yet they carried Egypt with them in their hearts into the wilderness, and were sorry that they had left it. He who reads of their *loathing that light bread*, and desiring to return to the bondage of Egypt for the gratification of their lusts, may wonder at their stupidity; who could see manna sent down from the heavens, and the stream of a river running miraculously through a dry desert, and not partake of them with thankfulness and devotion! But he will find, when he looks around him, that men are just such now as they were in the wilderness: carnal, inattentive, and worldly minded. Christians, called to a state of salvation, give the preference to that world which they renounced at their baptism, and bring it with them into the Christian profession, as the Hebrews brought Egypt with them into the wilderness. Whatever you think of the manna from heaven, and a springing well from a stone of flint, you have a greater miracle before your eyes daily. You have Christ, come down to be the life of the world, and offering himself as the true manna in the blessed sacrament. You have his spirit and his word, as a water of life attending you in your way through this wilderness: but these spiritual blessings have their value with those only who are *spiritually minded*. Count the congregation of Christians in any parish, and see how few of that number attend the Holy Communion: then you will discover, that Christians are sick of this Jewish distemper. As the wonders of the wilderness made no impression on those who were still affected to Egypt; so Christianity can offer nothing desirable to those whose

hearts are full of the world. Where there is an attachment to fulness of feasting, excess of drinking, and to the other prospects, pleasures and profits of the world, there can be no spiritual appetite. To thirst after earthly and heavenly things at the same time, is as impossible as to serve God and Mammon. Can the man, who makes it his wish and his pleasure to be drunk, join with the prophet and say—*Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, even the living God: when shall I come and appear before the presence of God?* Doth he not rather say "let "me never come near him, for I have no relish for "his ways or his worship, I wish there were no "church, no sacraments, no preaching, no praying. "I was baptized to be a member of Christ, but I "never desire to be in his company. Let me conti-"nue to be one of the swine of Egypt, as I have hi-"therto been, and let my latter end be like theirs." Such is the language which passes in many hearts when it is put into plain English. Men are called by different names at distant periods of time: but the workings of their minds are the same in all ages. The devout Christian follows the calling of God at this day, on the same motives of faith as the Patriarchs did of old, and considers this life as a pilgrimage; while others are drawn away by the world and flesh just as they were whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. They were made examples to us, with this intention, as the apostle instructs us, *that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted**. If we look to their history in the book of Numbers, we find how discontented and miserable they were

* 1 Cor. x. 6.

under the way of life to which God had brought them: *The children of Israel wept again and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? It was well with us in Egypt, but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes.* Then we read that God complied with their murmurings, and sent them meat to the full; but sent a plague after it, whereby many were destroyed; and the place received its name from the *graves* of those who were buried for their *lusts*.

Here the child of this world may see his own picture. It is his object to gratify himself at any rate, without considering the consequences. His Paradise is this Egypt: self-denial is a meagre doctrine, and there is nothing to be got, which he can relish, by the service of God. You will therefore see people as fretful and cross when devotion and self-denial come in their way, as the weeping Israelites, who complained that they were dried up with eating manna. And the consequence is as it was of old, *God is not well pleased* with them: and sooner or later, every man will feel the effect of setting God against him by his indifference and disaffection. Some have their punishment in that fulness which they have desired. Who amongst us cannot recollect many, who have died before their time, by following some ungoverned appetite; and come to the same end, by the same means, as they who were buried at *Kibroth Hattaavah?* If they live long to enjoy that for which they thought it worth their while to murmur against and despise the ways of God, they suffer miserably in another respect: as it is said in the Psalm, *he gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul**: so that while their bodies were thriving their

* Psalm cvi. 15.

souls were starving. If it were possible to see the souls of some such people, they would look worse than skin and bone; wasting and perishing for lack of that grace by which the inner man is renewed. He then who wishes to find death, misery, and the displeasure of God, which is worst of all, let him turn back from his Christian profession, and demand satisfaction for all his lusts. But let him who wishes to find Canaan at last, be content to find a wilderness in the way to it, and there take with thankfulness what God has appointed for him.

LECTURE VII.

HISTORICAL FIGURES OF THE SCRIPTURES CONTINUED.

In the preceding Lecture, we have seen how the dangers of the Christian warfare are set before us, in the history of the Militant State of the Jewish Church in its translation from Egypt to Canaan. St. *Paul* hath expressly taught us, to consider that history as prophetical of our own situation as Christians; and hath shewed how it is to be applied as an admonition or warning to us, that we may not *fall after the same example of unbelief*. We have seen how the people who had been baptized under Moses, and had passed through the Red Sea, afterwards preferred the slavery of Egypt to the service of God in the wilderness; becoming weary of his ways, and despising the better for love of the worse.

But we followed them only on a part of their journey. Other circumstances are yet behind, from which the like instruction is to be gathered: and in treating of them, I shall observe the same order as the Apostle hath done in the 10th chapter of his first Ep. to the Cor. where he warns us not to be *idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* This refers us to the occasion of their making a golden calf, and worshipping it with the riotous mirth of idolaters;

which shewed that they had forsaken the true object of their worship, and had forgotten the design of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. While Moses was in conference with God upon the Mount, their folly had taken up an opinion, that he would not return to them; and consequently, that they might fall into licentiousness, without the fear of being called to an account: so they danced before a golden calf, and gave themselves up to eating and drinking and playing, as if they had totally forgotten the design of their journey through the wilderness. Are these the people whom God, with so mighty a hand, had lately rescued from the tyranny of Pharaoh? Are these the people who had seen the waters of the sea divided, to save them and destroy their enemies? who had followed a cloud which led them by day, and gave light to them by night? and had they so soon forgotten all these wonders, and fallen into the senseless mirth of idolatry? Strange it is! but such was the fact. And now let us observe the consequence. Moses, whom they had forgotten, descends from the Mount when they little expected him; he surprises them in the midst of their sin, and sends the Levites, armed, as his ministers, to execute vengeance; who smote with the sword from one side of the camp to the other, and there fell some thousands of the people. Our Saviour, in one of his discourses, hath applied this history as an admonition to those careless sinners, who live in pleasure, and are unmindful of Him who will shortly return to be their Judge: *But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him*

in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers *. This brings the history home to ourselves. As Moses for a time left the people in the wilderness, so hath our Leader left us, and he is now up with God in the holy Mount. In this interval, there are Christians (so called) who *wot not what is become of him*, and make a profane use of his absence; setting up this world, in some form or other, as their idol, and devoting themselves to the worship of it. Whatever the object may be, which any man has substituted in the place of God, that object is to him what the calf was to the Hebrews. How many are there who spend their lives in the dance of pleasure, as if they had been sent hither for no other purpose! others devote themselves to honours and preferments; and, to accomplish their designs, affect popularity, and worship *the beasts of the people*. Wealth is the object of others; and theirs is a calf of gold. The covetous serve mammon the God of riches; and the sin of *covetousness* is expressly called by the name of *Idolatry* †. Are these the people of God? Are these they, who were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ as *dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness*? Are these the children of Abraham; followers of them who through faith and patience obtained the promises?—Merciful God, what a transformation is this! Are they not rather of those unprofitable servants, whom the Lord at his return from the Mount shall surprise and judge as hypocrites and unbelievers?

We have another example of our danger from the

* Luke xii. 44.

† The learned Mr. *Parkhurst*, in his Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, gives very good reasons why we ought rather here to understand the *sin* of *unlawful lusts*, as in that other expression, *whose God is their belly*. See under the word πλεονεξια.

case of the Israelites, who fell into sin from evil communications and bad company. There was a *mixt multitude* of strolling Egyptians and disorderlypeople who went up with the Hebrews out of Egypt, and attended their camp from motives of curiosity or beggary. These are said to have *fallen a lusting*, and to have propagated their evil inclinations among the congregation; who, led by their example, provoked God with their discontent and murmurings. The Christian church hath always been attended by a like unprincipled multitude of heretics, sensualists, enthusiasts, sectaries, and even atheists; men, who being discontented with the ways and doctrines of the Christian society, have recommended and spread their own evil opinions, and occasioned multitudes to fall away. A defection from the doctrines of Christianity is the natural consequence of a departure from the worship and sacraments and authority of the Church. Some of the earliest instances of blasphemy against the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, were found among ignorant people in those times of confusion and rebellion, when a mixt multitude of more than sixty different sects arose even to the astonishment of those who first began the separation *. But afterwards the same error was adopted by men of higher pretensions to learning, who have found too many followers; till the times have at length produced a new generation of opinionists, who assume to themselves, and attribute to one another, the honours of confession and martyrdom, for asserting the blasphemy of Socinus

* An authentic and very curious account of the errors and blasphemies of that time, (two years before the death of the king) was published in a Treatise entitled, *Gangræna* by *Thomas Edwards*, Presbyterian minister; of which, see part 1. p. 82. 110. But see also Burnet's Hist. of the Reformation. An. 1549. vol. 2. p. 111, 112.

against the church and the kingdom of Christ, with the same boldness as the saints, in the primitive times, asserted the doctrines of the gospel against the heathen powers and the kingdom of Satan. But boldness without truth will never make a Christian confessor; and if a man injures himself for the love of error, he is not a martyr but a suicide.

They who are acquainted with the world, and the present state of religion and literature, must have observed, that heresy, schism, and the new philosophy of the Deists, with their numerous adherents, form a mixt multitude, which are always hovering about the Christian camp, and never fail to corrupt it. They are now boasting of their success, and threaten to overwhelm this church in a very short time with a deluge of Unitarianism, that is, of Mahometan infidelity *.

The destruction of three and twenty thousand was occasioned by the Israelites associating with the people of *Midian*, who invited them to the feasts of their idols; in consequence of which, they fell into shameless fornication after the manner of the Heathens. And as there were wicked Midianites and Moabites in the neighbourhood of the camp, so is there a wicked world always near at hand, ready to invite and seduce the servants of God by its ensnaring customs and diversions. To mix with the world on all occasions, and not to be corrupted by its ways, is almost as unlikely, as that the Hebrews should go to an idol feast with the Midianites, and not to be the worse for it. What is the natural tendency of many, and even the design of some public diversions tolerated among Christians, but to corrupt youth and give opportunities

* See *Priestley's* Sermon on *Free Enquiry.*

to vice? How are most of the scenes of public diversion crouded with the *daughters of Midian*, who are well aware, that what is there to be seen and heard will seldom fail to encourage the vicious, and betray some of the innocent into their snares! wherever any public meetings have this tendency to corrupt the manners, we may call them by what names we please, but they are as *Moab* and *Midian*, if they are enemies of Christian virtue.

Balak, the king of the Moabites, hated the camp of Israel, and bribed *Balaam*, a prophet, to *curse* them. Just thus doth the world hate the church, and is never happier than when it can hire the ministers of the church to turn against it and betray its interests. But it can no more succeed by all its curses than the wicked Balak could: it must seduce Christians to *sin*, and then it prevails; not by its own power, but by tempting the church to provoke the anger of God. When Balaam found that he could prevail nothing by his sacrifices and enchantments, then he gave counsel to Balak to corrupt the people of the camp with fornication; and that soon answered the purpose.

But now we are to learn another lesson, from the example of those who are said to have *tempted Christ* with their impatience under the ways of his providence. When the people expected to see an end of their journeyings, it pleased God still to lead them round about; but being weary of this unsettled life, we are told that *the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way**: and, to punish their impatience on this occasion, fiery serpents were sent to destroy them. But when Moses prayed for them, he

* Numbers xxi. 4.

was directed to place a serpent on a pole *, and when they who were bitten looked up to it, they were saved from death. Our Saviour hath applied this to the lifting up of himself upon the cross, where the serpent that hath the power of death, was to be vanquished; that they who are wounded by sin, and in danger of eternal death, may look up to him and live. What was the offence of the people? It was impatience. What was their punishment? they were delivered to the power of the destroyer. What was the remedy? They were directed to look up to a figure of the cross. And where should the impatient now look up, but to Jesus the author and finisher of their faith; that great example of patient suffering, who for their sakes endured the cross, and despised the shame of it. If we are tempted to *be weary and faint in our minds*, when the Providence of God is leading us by some tedious and disagreeable way against our will, then we are to look up to this pattern of patience, and to consider, how he took the painful way of the cross, and submitted his own will to the will of God. With this example before us, let us ask ourselves whether we have any thing to complain of; we who ought to have been there instead of him! In his death we see the victory that overcometh the world. For the joy that was set before him, he waited till the great work of our salvation was finished: and we are to wait in like manner, till all the designs of Providence are accomplished in us; for we can inherit the promises on no other condition: *he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

* In the heathen Mythology, a serpent, twisted about a stick, is the emblem of health, and the ensign of *Esculapius*.

But salvation, such as God hath promised, is not an object to all men. Some have no opinion of it; as there were those amongst the people in the wilderness, who *thought scorn of that pleasant land* to which they were going. When the spies who were sent to view the land of Canaan made their report of it, and brought back with them some of its fruits, they differed very much in their accounts. They who proved faithful and told the truth, said it was an exceeding good land flowing with milk and honey; and that they were well able, with God on their side, to take possession of it, and overcome the inhabitants, whose *defence was departed from them.* Others *brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched:* they described it as a land which ate up, that is, starved its inhabitants; and that these were men of a gigantic stature, to whom ordinary men were but as grasshoppers. This latter report found too much credit: and the congregation was so discouraged and terrified by it, that they *lift up their voices and wept;* and they murmured against Moses and Aaron for bringing them into these insuperable difficulties, even determined to make them another captain and go back. This is the act of unbelief for which they were doomed to fall in the wilderness, without being permitted to see that land which they would take no pains to win.

Such is the case of those fearful minds and faint hearts, which say *there is a lion in the way,* and magnify all the difficulties of the Christian warfare. The heavenly land, as they conceive of it, and as they hear from people like themselves, is not a place that would make them happy. Besides there are such temptations in the way as no man can resist. Vice is strong, and nature is weak. The gospel prescribes

a way of life that would starve people, and take away all their comfort. Therefore when all things are considered, nothing is to be done, but to give up the cause, and go back to the opinions and ways of the children of this world.

If I may give you my own sentiment, I do not suppose there is a sin upon earth more hateful to God, than this of undervaluing his promises, distrusting his protection, and making unjust representations either of his religion itself, or of the rewards of it; as if his service were hard, or the end of it not worth attaining. This I can tell you, that such people are often made more miserable, and suffer worse agitations of mind from disappointments in the way of their own chusing, than the most abstracted saint ever suffered from the practice of self-denial in the way of godliness. For we may lay it down as a certain rule, that they who have not faith to see the value of the other world, have not the wit to use this properly: and no man need wish his worst enemy more wretched than the abuse of this world will make him. But, on the contrary, what words can describe the blessedness of him, who depending on the promises of God, conquers the difficulties of life, and hath *hope in his death!* such a hope as is signified by the divine Psalmist, in words much to our present purpose—*I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* As if he had said, "I believe the report concerning that good land, to "the possession of which we are journeying; I know "the value of it, and that the Lord himself is my "defence by the way; and so my heart hath not "failed me: therefore I give the same advice to all; "*wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall* "*strengthen thine heart:* he who led Joshua to vic-

" tory in the promised land, shall bring down the " walls of the mighty, and support thee against all " that appears gigantic and terrible in the way of thy " salvation." St. *Paul*, having pointed out to us, and applied all these figures as examples to us under the gospel, draws this weighty moral from the history of our fathers who journeyed in the wilderness: " *where-* " *fore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest* " *he fall. There hath no temptation taken you, but such* " *as is common to man: but God is faithful who will* " *not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,* " *but will, with the temptation also, make a way to es-* " *cape that ye may be able to bear it* *." This is the doctrine we are to learn from their history. He that standeth may now fall through unbelief, as they did: he that has been brought out of Egypt, may fall in the wilderness; therefore let us *pass the time of our sojourning here in fear*. But then, as God is still with us, we are never to be discouraged in the time of trial, nor to doubt of his protection. If there is a sea on one side, and a host of Egyptians on the other, and there seems *no way to escape*, the waters shall be divided and the Egyptians shall be overthrown. If there is neither bread nor water in appearance, some improbable causes shall give us a supply of both; some flinty stone shall become a springing well, and the heavens above shall give us meat enough. Then for the sicknesses of the soul, we have the remedy of the cross; and against the gigantic race of Anak, a defender who will never leave us nor forsake us: howsoever great and formidable the enemies of the Christian may appear, *Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.*

* 1 Cor. x. 12, 13.

Though it is the design of these lectures rather to interpret the scripture than to apply it; yet we are to consider the application as the end, and the interpretation as the means: therefore I cannot help indulging myself sometimes in dwelling upon the moral part, which is the most edifying of all. The history of the church in the wilderness is figurative, and we have learned what it signifies: but what good will this knowledge do us, if there is no counsel with it? What shall we gain by seeing how men were lost, unless we take advice from thence and learn how we may be saved? I therefore do not spare, when occasion offers, to add to my interpretations such spiritual advice as arises out of them. The length and labour of my undertaking is the greater upon this account; but I hope your profit will be greater in proportion. The church that went from Egypt to Canaan gives us an example of every thing that can happen to the Christian Church, from the beginning of it even to the end of the world: therefore no historical figure of the scripture is of more importance to us than this journey of the Hebrews through the wilderness: and I ought not yet to lay it aside. For there are two particulars remaining, which are of great signification: the one is the rebellion of *Corah*, and the other is the settlement of the church in *Canaan*, a land of the *Gentiles*.

St. *Jude*, in his epistle concerning the corruption of the Church, speaks of some who *perished in the gainsaying of Core:* therefore this same evil which happened in the church of Moses, is to be found in the church of Christ, and it behoves us to consider what it was. *Corah* and his company had no dispute about the object or form of divine worship: they questioned none of the doctrines of the law; they rose up against

the persons of Moses and Aaron; that is against the civil and ecclesiastical authority; contending that themselves and all the congregation had an equal right; that Moses and Aaron had taken too much upon themselves: and by exercising an usurped authority were abusing and making fools of the people. This was their sin, and they maintained it to the last, and perished in it. It was the dispute of popular power against divine authority: and wherever the like pretensions are avowed by Christians, and the same arguments used in support of them, there we see the *gainsaying of Corah*. It is a lamentable circumstance attending this sin, that it inspires great boldness and obstinacy, such as we read of in *Corah* and his party. Other sinners are apt to be ashamed of themselves; but these never; because they assert their own sanctity in the act of their disobedience. When they set up human right against that which is by God's appointment; the more proud and obstinate they are, the more colour they seem to give to their pretensions. It is one reason why rebellion was so severely punished in Corah, and is now so severely threatened in the New Testament, that men are never known to repent of it. In vain did Moses exclaim and remonstrate against the wickedness of Corah: he and all his party preserved the same good opinion of themselves, and persisted in it to the last; even appealing to God himself, though they were risen up against God's ministers; till the earth opened; and the fire devoured them.

From this example of Corah, we are to learn that God considers all opposition against lawful authority, as a sin against himself. He declares that *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity*

and idolatry *: the meaning of which, as it stands in the book of *Samuel*, is this; that if a man were a Jew, and yet a rebel, he might as well be an heathen: if he were too stubborn to submit to the ordinances of God, he might as well be a sorcerer, or serve idols. And it is worthy of observation, that this severe sentence is against *Saul*, a king, who usurped the authority of the priesthood, and pleaded a godly reason for it. But so jealous is God, for the wisest ends, upon this subject, that no dignity of person, no appearance of reason, is admitted in excuse for the sin of rebellion. We therefore rightly pray in the Liturgy of the church of England, that God would deliver us from rebellion in the state and schism in the church; and in order to this, we should also pray, that he would deliver us from the principles out of which they proceed; for none of our reasonings will prevail in this case. For my own part, I must confess, that if there be any man who is so far infatuated as to have persuaded himself that God is no proprietor of power in the world of his own making and governing, and that all men are born to a state of equality; I would no more reason with that man, than I would preach temperance to a swine, or honesty to a wolf. I would leave him to himself, and turn toward those who have not yet received the infection.

The settlement of the church of the Hebrews in Canaan, a land of the Heathens, is the last article I am to explain, as prefigurative of the Christian church. It is mentioned as such in the apology of St. Stephen against the Jews: *Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus*, (i. e. Joshua) *into the*

* 1 Samuel xv. 23.

possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers. The doctrine of all others most unacceptable and odious to a Jew, was this of the translation of the tabernacle of God to the Gentiles. St. *Stephen* therefore does not literally affirm it, but covertly, and as a prophet should do, under the shadow of that antient history which was intended to foreshew it. The Jewish church derived much danger from its situation among the Canaanites; for though God had driven them out as possessors, and established his own people in their land, he left some of the former possessors to be thorns in their sides for trial and punishment: and their history shews how often they were ensnared by the abominable doctrines of idolatry, till the captivity of Babylon was the reward of their apostacy.

Wonderful was the settlement of the Jews in Canaan, with the fall of Jericho, and the victories of the people of God against all the armaments and confederacies of their enemies. But not less wonderful was the establishment of Christianity amongst the Gentiles. Heathenism was in as full and as quiet possession of the world and its empire at the coming of Christ, as the Canaanites were in their own land when Joshua entered it. But the voice of the gospel preached by a few fishermen from among the Jews, a people held in the utmost contempt by the whole heathen world, soon cast down all the highest fences of Satan's kingdom, as the walls of Jericho fell down at the sound of rams' horns blown by priests. As the Hebrews in the progress of their victories were exhorted to fear nothing, remembering how Pharaoh had been subdued in Egypt; so ought Christians to remember daily, how God reduced the power of Satan

all over the heathen world, till his temples were destroyed, and the churches of Christ were placed upon their ruins.

But then, as there was a remnant of the Canaanites, to whom the people were frequently joining themselves in marriage, and consequently relapsing into idolatry, according to that of the Psalmist—*They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them, but were mingled among the heathen and learned their works, and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them:* so the works of heathen authors, with the fables of their false gods, the abominable rites of their religion, and the obscenity and immorality of their practices, are in like manner remaining among Christians; and it has been the custom for ages, all over Europe, to communicate the rudiments of languages and learning to young minds from heathen books, without due care to caution them against imbibing heathen principles; by which thousands of minds are corrupted, and through early prejudice rendered incapable of understanding the value of truth, and the abominable nature of heathen error. How frequently are heathen moralists applied to, when the finest rules of human prudence for the conduct of life are to be found in the scripture. But to go to the heathens for divinity, as some authors do, is intolerable. They blow out the candle of revelation, and then go raking into the embers of paganism to light it again. Many good and learned men, of the first ability and taste, have observed and lamented the bondage we are under to heathen modes of education; but custom is a tyrant which hears no reason. However, there can be no harm, and I hope there will be no offence, in praying that God will enable us to correct all our

errors from the history of past miscarriages. This is the great use we are to make of our present subject. The dangers to the souls of men are the same in all ages: and their errors are the same for sense, however they may differ in form: so that we cannot be surprised and ensnared by any temptation that comes upon the church, if we look to the things that are past.

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE PERSONAL FIGURES, OR TYPES, OF THE SCRIPTURES; PARTICULARLY THOSE OF MOSES AND JOSEPH, PROPOSED BY ST. STEPHEN, IN HIS APOLOGY TO THE JEWS.

THE Scripture would have supplied us with much more matter, of the same kind with that in the two preceding lectures. I might have set before you the history of *Gideon's* victory, and the fall of *Sisera;* which were signs of the spiritual victories of the church over the enemies of her salvation *. I might have considered the rejection of the Jews, as it was prefigured in the histories of *Cain* and *Abel*, of *Jacob* and *Esau*, of *Isaac* and *Ishmael*, of *Ephraim and Manasses:* to which I might have added a view of their present state, as signified by the fall of the proud *Nebuchadnezzar*, and his temporary banishment among the beasts in a state of insanity, till the times of judgment passed over him. The grace of God to the *heathen* world, in admitting them to the salvation of the gospel, might have been exemplified by the healing of *Naaman* the *Syrian*, and the visitation of the widow of *Sarepta:* which two cases our Saviour pointed out to the Jews at Nazareth; but they would not bear the most distant hint of the reception of the Gentiles; and were so filled with wrath, that they would

* See Isaiah ix. 4. Psalm lxxxiii. 9.

have thrown him down headlong from the brow of an hill, (after the Roman fashion) as an enemy to his country; for so were traitors punished at *Rome*, by being thrown from the top of the *Tarpeian* Rock.

Many figures are to be found in the occurrences and circumstantials of the history of the gospel by those who read it with such an intention. In short, the history of the Old and New Testaments hath a secondary or prophetical sense in many instances: its great events were signs and figures of *things not seen as yet;* and many of them are in force as such to this hour. Great things are still to be expected, of which we can form no conception, but as they are set before us in the figures of the sacred history. God shall descend, and the earth be on fire, and the trumpet shall sound, and the tribes of mankind shall be assembled, as formerly at *Horeb*. Distress shall come upon a wicked world, when its iniquity shall be full, as once upon *Babylon*, and afterwards upon the apostate *Jerusalem*. The armies of the Lord shall encompass it; and it shall be overthrown, with them that dwell therein. For this reason, the visitation of Jerusalem was foretold in such terms by our Blessed Lord, that in many of his expressions it is hard to distinguish, whether that, or the end of the world, is to be understood.

These things, however, I must at present leave to your meditation, and go forward to the figurative histories of *individual persons;* such as were the prophets, kings, heroes, and saints of the old testament; who by their actions, as well as their words, *foreshewed the coming* of that Saviour, in whom the s int made perfect through sufferings, the conqueror, the prince, the priest and the prophet, were to be united. As the things which befell the church at large, happened to

them for ensamples to the whole congregation of Christian people; so the things which befell the prophets of old happened for ensamples of the Saviour himself; that his character and history, as the true Son of God who should come into the world, might be infallibly ascertained and demonstrated, by a comparison with the various characters of those who had been most eminent in the church of old. Some of these characters were extremely different from others, and the events of their history very unlike; but the character and history of the Messiah was to comprehend them all. For this end their lives were purposely conformed by the divine Providence to the image of him that was to come after.

This consideration, when we see the force of it, will reconcile us to some strange things, which might appear very unreasonable, if they were to be considered only in themselves, not under the relation which they bear, and were intended to bear to higher and greater things. How monstrous would it seem in any other history, that a man should be buried in the body of a fish, and cast up alive again after three days upon the dry land! But if this strange thing happened, that it might afterwards be compared with the return of Jesus Christ from the dead, for the salvation of all mankind; then the preservation of *Jonah* becomes fit and reasonable; it being of infinite consequence to the world, that the fact of Christ's resurrection, when it should happen, should be admitted and believed; and so the case was worthy of the divine interposition. *Jonah* was not preserved by a miracle for his *own sake*, but for a *sign*, to instruct the people of God in the truth of their salvation, and the peculiar means or mode of it. Two strange events of the same kind are more credible than one; because the objection is

removed which might arise from the singularity of the case. The resurrection of Christ is a true fact, and a credible fact: for why? it was foreshewn by the preservation of Jonah; another fact of the same kind. And again, to take the matter the other way; the preservation of Jonah was a miracle, worthy of God, from its *relation* to the *resurrection of Christ;* the most important fact in itself, and the most necessary to be believed, of all that should ever happen from the beginning of the world to the end of it. Jonah's deliverance was intended to do what the apostles were sent over the world to do, *viz.* to witness the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour himself hath directed us to make this use of Jonah's history. The Jews required of him some miraculous fact as a testimony that he was the true Messiah; and he gave them this: *as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**. Here the person of Jonah is a sign of the person of Christ, and the belly of a devouring fish a sign of the power of the grave, by which he should be detained for the same time as Jonah was.

The lives of the other prophets had a like relation to the times and transactions of the Gospel. From a passage which is taken out of the 41st Psalm, and applied to the treason of *Judas;* it appears that some of the most remarkable circumstances in the life of the prophet David were prefigurative of other parallel circumstances in the life of Christ. It is observed by our Saviour himself, that in the treason of Judas, that *Scripture was fulfilled,* which saith, *he that eateth bread with me hath lift up his heel against me.* The

* Matt. xii. 39, 40.

familiar friend of David, whose treachery is here complained of, was *Achitophel*, to whom these words, in the letter of them, must be supposed to have referred: but if they were *fulfilled*, as our Saviour saith, *in Judas*, then they were prophetical; and the suffering of David from a traitor, foreshewed that the true David should be a sufferer from a person of the same character. Achitophel, a man entrusted with the chief management of David's affairs, took part against his master, and betrayed him to those who sought his life: and Judas in like manner, being first entrusted by his master, betrayed him to the chief priest, that he might be put to death. But now let us mark the sequel; for both these traitors came to the same tragical end; they both *hanged themselves*, when they failed of the success which their ambition aimed at: and if Judas had studied the Scripture as much as he studied the world, he might have foreseen his own fate in that of his brother traitor Achitophel. Unless the character of David, as a prophet, had a relation to the person of Christ, how can we account for it, that the name of *David* is applied to him by *Ezechiel* * four hundred years after the natural David was dead? On what other principal could David speak such words in the 16th Psalm, as could be verified only in the person of Christ? *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.* Concerning this passage St. Peter argued with the Jews, that it could not be meant of David himself, the memorials of whose death and burial were still remaining among them. That the Providence of God did exhibit in the person of David a character prefigurative of the Messiah, can never be doubted if we

* Ezechiel xxxvii. 25.

compare their characters together: both were shepherds, prophets, kings and conquerors; both were despised and set at nought by their brethren; oppressed and persecuted by the powerful; ungratefully reviled, mocked at, and betrayed, by rebels and traitors; and both were raised to the throne of Israel (called the *throne of David*) in opposition to all the power and malice of their enemies. From this similitude of character, all men might infallibly distinguish the true Son of David, when he should have fulfilled his course, and attained the kingdom on the holy hill of Sion.

In the prophet *Elijah*, we have a character prefigurative of the person and office of *John* the *Baptist*: whence it is said in the 4th chap. of Malachi, *behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*, &c. The Scribes and Pharisees, who took this passage literally, expected that the prophet *Elijah* (whom the New Testament calls *Elias*) would appear *in person* before the coming of the Messiah, and therefore, at the crucifixion, they observed of Jesus with a sneer, that though he had not as yet received any testimony from Elias, he might do so, even upon the cross, if they did but give him a little more time—*Let be*, said they, *let us see whether Elias will come to save him**. By those whose minds were enlightened, it had been understood, not that the *person* of *Elijah* should come again, but the *character*; that the *spirit* and *power* † of that prophet should be revived and fulfilled in the character of the Baptist. Let us therefore compare them together. As to their per-

* Matthew xxvii. 49. † Luke i. 17.

sonal appearance, we read that Elijah the Tishbite *was an hairy man* * (probably with a rough garment) *and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins.* And do we not read of John the Baptist his counterpart, that he also had *his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins?* With respect to their manner of life, Elijah frequented the wilderness, and was fed in solitude: and John the Baptist *was in the deserts,* and *came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,* and *his meat was locusts and wild honey,* proper to a man of a contemplative and holy life. In their office and ministry, which give importance to the other marks of their character, both of them were raised up for the great work of *reforming* a degenerate people, and turning to God those who had departed from him. Elijah brought over to Jehovah thousands of the people who had revolted to Baal: and John the Baptist warned a generation of vipers to flee from the wrath to come; and prevailed upon them to receive that *baptism of repentance* which was preparatory to the baptism of the Gospel. Elijah bore his testimony without fear against two kings, *Ahab* and *Ahaziah;* one of whom was urged on by that wicked woman *Jezebel,* who had determined to put that prophet to death. So did John boldly rebuke *Herod,* a king under the influence of another wicked woman, who sought his life and succeeded. Thus we understand how far these two were alike in their persons, their manners, and their ministry; and with what propriety it was said of John by the angel, that he should go before the Lord God of Israel *in the spirit and power of Elias.* There is something very remarkable to our present purpose in the testimony our Saviour gave to

* 1 Kings xix. 4.

John, as being the person in whom the character of Elias was fulfilled: *I say unto you that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatever they listed as it is written of him**. These last words plainly refer us to what was written of Elijah; from whose history it might be foreseen, what would become of John the Baptist; namely, that a wicked and powerful woman should thirst after his blood, and that a king should send his officers to take away his life. This was what they *listed to do* against *Elijah:* therefore when Herodias persecuted the Baptist, and Herod sent an executioner to behead him, they acted according *as it was written.* Elijah was miraculously preserved to be carried up alive into heaven: whereto John followed him, in a way more agreeable to the spirit of the Gospel, the way of martyrdom †.

We find another figurative character in the person of Isaac the son of Abraham, whose sacrifice and deliverance were descriptive of Christ's death and resurrection. *Abraham,* says the apostle, *offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure* ‡. The history of this transaction informs us, that *on the third day* Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place where his son was to be offered up. He *laid upon* Isaac the *wood* on which he was to suffer, as Christ carried his own cross: and when the knife was lifted up to slay him, the angel of the Lord interposed, and Isaac was received, as it were

* Mark ix. 13.

† If the reader should be pleased with what is here said, he will be much more pleased with *Considerations on the Life and Death of John the Baptist,* by Dr. *Horne,* the late Bishop of Norwich.

‡ Hebrews xi. 19.

from the dead; having been actually devoted to death in the mind of his father for *three days*. In his substitute the ram, a real sacrifice was offered, as Abraham had expected, and Isaac was still alive; so that in the one we have a figure of the death of Christ, in the other of his resurrection. And to render this transaction more descriptive, the providence of God directed Abraham on this occasion to the *mountains of Moriah*, where the temple of Jerusalem was afterwards built; in which the lamb Christ Jesus was daily offered up for many hundred years in the sacrifices of the law: and where Christ himself at length suffered; accomplishing all the offerings of the law, and fulfilling the sacrifice and figurative resurrection of Isaac. The 11th chapter* of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which the history of Isaac is treated of, would afford us many other examples of illustrious persons whose actions and sufferings were conformed to the character of that Saviour in whom they believed. But of all the personal histories which have a prophetic relation to the sufferings and exaltation of Jesus Christ, none are so full to the purpose as those two characters of *Joseph* and *Moses*, which were selected by the blessed martyr St. *Stephen* in his apology against the Jews: which apology, when rightly considered, opens a wonderful scene, and carries us very far into the prophetical imagery of the scripture. St. *Stephen*, in his disputes with the adversaries of the gospel, had argued in such a manner from the figures of the Old Testament, to vindicate the sufferings and demonstrate the

* A learned Dignitary of this Church, who is *mighty in the scriptures*, hath composed a series of discourses, equally excellent and edifying, upon the several characters of the faithful in this chapter: which I hope he will not forget to publish in due time.

verity of the mission of Jesus Christ, that none could *resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake* *. And at length, in his speech, before the high priest at his trial, we have the method and substance of his reasoning: of which I am now to make my use, so far as it relates to the present part of our subject. The design of this discourse, and the drift of the argument may be collected by comparing some passages of it together.

Having reminded the Jews, in the first place †, that the promises of God, and the hopes of the fathers, did not rest in a temporal or worldly inheritance, as they had falsely flattered themselves; he lays down the histories of *Joseph* and *Moses*, with the persecutions they underwent from their people, and the interposition of God for their exaltation: and, then, to shew his *meaning* in all this, he makes the following application, for the conviction of his hearers, who had been the persecutors of Jesus Christ. "Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in heart and "ears (who from your disobedience are not able to "hear and understand what the law has declared to "you) ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your "fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have "not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain "them which shewed before of the coming of the "Just one, of whom ye have been now the betrayers "and murderers ‡." This application shews with what design he had reminded them of the reception which Joseph and Moses, those two eminent characters of the law, had met with. He meant to shew them, that as these favourites of heaven, whom God

* See Acts, chap. vi. 7.

† See the beginning of the 7th chapter of the Acts.

‡ Acts vii. 51.

had commissioned to be the Saviours of their people, were opposed and persecuted; so had they now, in like form and manner, opposed and persecuted the Just one, Jesus Christ; and in so doing had fulfilled the scripture, and done all that was wanting to confirm the truth of his divine mission; inasmuch as none could be the true Saviour, according to the scriptures, but a person rejected by them, as these holy prophets had been rejected by their forefathers.

Such is the purport of St. *Stephen's* apology; and, with this key, we are prepared to examine the particulars. He enters on the character of Joseph with these remarkable words: *the patriarchs moved with envy sold Joseph into Egypt.* Who were the enemies of Joseph?—The patriarchs; his *own brethren,* all against him to a man. Having first plotted together to take away his life, they *sold* him, and then shewed the marks of his *blood,* that his father might be assured he was dead. The strangers to whom he was given up, carried him far from his family, and placed him among heathens in the land of Egypt. All these particulars were exactly verified in the person of Christ; his *brethren moved with envy sold* him for money, and delivered him to the Gentiles. The brother who advised * the selling of Joseph, that some *profit* might be made of him, was *Judah,* who answers even in his name to the traitor that sold Jesus Christ: but the guilt which attends his name extends to the whole nation of the Jews, of whom Judah among the twelve patriarchs, and Judas among the twelve apostles, were the representatives. *Envy* was the motive on which the patriarchs sold Joseph; and Christ was accused and condemned on

* See Gen. xxxvii. 26.

the same principle, according to the opinion of his judge; of whom two of the evangelists relate, that Pilate knew the chief priests had delivered him *for envy*. When Joseph declared his dreams, which signified his future superiority over his whole family; his brethren hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words; and persuaded themselves they should prevent his advancement by selling him for a slave: but this was the circumstance without which his advancement could not have happened: he had never been a ruler and a prince, if he had not been sent into Egypt as a slave, and to prison as a malefactor. So when Christ asserted his own dignity, his brethren took up stones to cast at him for making himself the Son of God: and when he told them they should see him coming in the clouds, and sitting at the right hand of power, they pronounced him to be guilty of blasphemy, and inflicted those sufferings which were necessary to his exaltation. They sold him into the hands of the Romans, to be treated as a *slave, scourged, and crucified*. With the kingdoms of the Gentiles, to whom his brethren delivered him, he remains to this day; and thither they must come after him, if they are to meet with him, as Joseph was followed by his family into Egypt.

Much more might be said to shew how exact the parallel is between the history of Joseph and the history of Christ, if we were to pursue it. We see Joseph in company with two malefactors in the prison, and promising life to one of them: we see him endued with such *wisdom*, that even Heathens were obliged to own that this Hebrew spoke by the spirit of God; and they were content that he should receive the power and glory of dominion amongst them: while his brethren had rejected him as an

insignificant dreamer. One circumstance, however, I must not pass over, which is particularly noted by St. Stephen; that *at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren.* At the first meeting they knew him not: but after they had accused themselves for being guilty of his death, and had imputed their trouble to its proper cause, then their brother was made known unto them. Thus we trust it will be at last betwixt Christ and the Jews. The time will come, when they shall see the true reason why they had been wandering backwards and forwards, and seeking their bread with anxiety and suspicion, in a strange land; and shall say with the brethren of Joseph, *we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us* *. God who found out the iniquity of Joseph's brethren, and at last opened their eyes to see and confess it, can turn the hearts of the Jews, how hard soever they may be at present, and prepare them for that second meeting when their Saviour shall be known to them.

Some things which have passed before us in the present lecture would suggest many profitable reflections, if I had time to insist upon them.

From the office of John the Baptist, which was preparatory to the doctrines of Jesus Christ, we are to learn, that no man can receive the truth of the gospel, unless he is prepared by a *baptism of repentance,* and is ready to forsake his sins. The counsel of God for his salvation can take no effect, till his former evil ways are given up. With an attachment to his old sins and errors, he can neither understand nor approve any thing the gospel offers to him; but will

* Genesis xlii. 21.

either hate or despise it, and tempt others to do the same: as the scribes did, who would not accept of John's baptism. Why do not all men receive the gospel, but because some have taken part with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and determine never to renounce them? To all such the gospel is a thing of no value.

From the case of Joseph, and our blessed Saviour, hated and persecuted as they were, we should learn to *suspect* all those whom the world *magnifies*, and not trust to reports and appearances, where self love and temporal interest are concerned to disguise things. This is a world in which truth is neglected, goodness evil spoken of, and innocence run down and persecuted. It is the constant practice of mankind to misrepresent and defame those whom they have injured, that their own injustice may not appear. When virtue is oppressed, it is generally silent; while its oppressors never fail to be clamorous in their own vindication: and in most cases, men may distinguish where the fault lies, by the noise that is made to conceal it. When Christ was defamed he *answered not again;* and his disciples also suffered in patience; while the Jews were running here and there all over the world to tell their story, and turn the hearts of men against the gospel, that they might be prepared to disbelieve and reject it, as soon as it should come to their ears.

In the history of Joseph's brethren, you see them in distress under their wants; not able to stay at home without starving, nor daring to go into Egypt, taking the lord of the country for their enemy. Every mortal man will suffer under the like miserable dilemma, who cannot find his happiness in the world, and dare not seek it where only it is to be found. All

this happens because he does not know Jesus Christ; does not know that he is the brother and the friend of sinners, ready to take them under his protection and supply all their wants; but supposes religion to be his enemy, and expects to be roughly handled. The brethren of Joseph did not know him; and were distressed with fear and anxiety; the Jews did not know Christ, and are to this day wandering, restless, and hopeless about the world; and every man will find himself in the like condition, till he discovers that the religion he is afraid of is his best friend, and that God has sent a Saviour before us to *preserve life, not to destroy it.*

LECTURE IX.

ON THE PERSONAL FIGURES, OR TYPES, OF THE SCRIPTURE.

(A CONTINUATION OF THE FORMER.)

Of all the personal figures of the Old Testament, none are so proper to answer the purpose of these lectures, as the two characters which St. Stephen proposed to the Jews, as figures and fore-runners of Jesus Christ; whom they would not have crucified if they had known him, and they could not have failed to know him, if they had looked to those saints of old who had fore-shewed him in their lives and actions, more plainly than words could have described him.

Notice had been given of this by Moses himself; so that they ought not to have been ignorant. *A prophet,* said he, *shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me:* which words are cited by St. Stephen and marked out for special observation: *This is that Moses, who said unto the children of Israel, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me:* and from the use he has made of the history of Moses, in the 7th chapter of *the Acts,* it appears that this likeness extends to his whole character, from his birth to his death: as we shall see when we come to examine the particulars. We are likewise taught by St. *Paul,* that Moses, as a minister and mediator, was faithful in his office, *for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after:*

when the Son himself, the great and final mediator, should take the direction of the house of God, and accomplish the ministry, which is now *witnessed* by the ministry of Moses.

The circumstances fittest for our purpose in the history of Moses, and most remarkable in themselves, are already selected by St. Stephen: to these, therefore, I shall confine myself; and treat of them in the order in which he has laid them down. But that we may first have a distinct view of the particulars, which will come under consideration, it may be proper to observe; that the history of Moses, as here to be applied, comprehends, 1. The circumstances of his *birth*. 2. His qualifications and endowments as the *minister of God*. 3. His office as the *deliverer* of his people. 4. The *reception* he met with from the people he came to *deliver*.

Our blessed Saviour's birth in Judæa was rendered very remarkable by the circumstances that attended it, and the character of the time in which it happened.

When the promises of God were about to be fulfilled by the redemption of mankind, and the time foretold by the prophets was drawing near; the nation of the Jews was fallen under bondage to the Roman power, and were subject to Herod, a strange king, jealous of the people he was set over, and apprehensive of a deliverer to be born among themselves. When the report of Christ's birth was brought by the wise men, Herod determined to cut him off; and with this view cruelly slaughtered all the infants in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. With all this the birth of Moses agrees in every circumstance.

For 1. *The time of the promise drew nigh which God had sworn to Abraham*. It had been foretold, that the

seed of Abraham should continue four hundred years in Egypt, and after that come out with great substance. When this time of redemption was approaching, the Hebrews were fallen into great affliction under a new king *who knew not Joseph;* who being probably an alien, had no respect to the merits or memory of him who had been a saviour to the land of Egypt; looking with a jealous eye upon all his people, as enemies, and treating them as captives and slaves. He had a suspicion that they would become more powerful, and get them up out of his land. To prevent which, he proceeded with subtilty, (as *Herod* did afterwards) and resolved upon a massacre of all the male infants of the Hebrews. He first commanded the midwives to kill them; but failing in this, *Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, every son that is born ye shall cast into the river. At this time Moses was born:* and a remarkable time it was: a strange new king kept the people of God in subjection, and murdered their infants, to prevent their deliverance. But Moses and Christ, under these wonderful circumstances, were both miraculously preserved, to accomplish the redemption for which they were raised up: and they were both preserved in the land of *Egypt.* Moses was taken up by Pharaoh's daughter, and escaped from the wrath of a cruel king: and the child Jesus was carried into Egypt by his parents to escape the wrath of Herod.

The nativity of Christ was dignified by the appearance of a star, and celebrated by an host of angels; though its earthly appearance was in poverty and obscurity. And some unusual circumstances marked the birth of Moses, though the particulars are not related. He was born of a poor oppressed people, the child of a slave, and doomed to death by the circum-

stances of his birth. But his parents were aware of some distinction, which shewed that he was raised up for some great purpose. St. Paul says, *they saw he was a proper child;* St. Stephen, that he was *exceeding fair;* the original is, *fair to God;* from all which it is most reasonable to understand, that some marks of divine favour and distinction were visible about him at his birth. His qualifications and endowments come next under consideration.

He is said to have been *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians**, and to have been *mighty in words and in deeds.* This character is given of Christ as a prophet, nearly in the same terms. The two disciples who walked with him to Emmaus described him as *a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.* When Moses was grown up, he went forth to vindicate the rights of his people, and gave them a sign of his power by slaying an Egyptian who did them wrong; casting out one of their strong men, to shew that a stronger than he was come upon him, and that God had visited his people. So did Christ give a sign of his power as a redeemer, by rescuing the souls and bodies of men from the bondage of Satan: casting out devils by the finger of God, to shew that the kingdom of God was come upon them.

The Egyptian wisdom, according to the accounts we have of it, delivered all things under signs and figures; speaking to the mind rather by visible objects than by words, and conveying instruction under a hidden form which only the wise could understand. I do not stay to enquire into the reason of this; I only speak of the fact, which is well known to

* Compare Luke ii. 52.

scholars. Moses must therefore have been accustomed early to this mode of delivering science by symbols and hieroglyphics: and we have seen that his whole law is according to the same method, not speaking literally of any spiritual thing, not even of the immortality of the soul (whence some have ignorantly supposed that it was not a doctrine of his law) but delivering all things under signs, emblems, and descriptive ceremonies, which they who do not study, are miserably in the dark as to the wisdom of the Mosaic dispensation.

The wisdom of our blessed Saviour was always conveyed under the same form; all his instructions were given in *parables*, were visible objects signifying intellectual things; and *without a parable spake he not unto them;* which form of speech, they who do not study and delight in, as the medium of instruction which the wisdom of God hath preferred from the beginning of the world, will never see farther either into the Old or New Testament.

The mission of Moses bears witness, in the form of it, to the mission of Jesus Christ; and gives the most worthy idea that can be conceived both of the dignity and design of it. Both these ministers of God were sent upon their commissions by a voice from heaven. God appeared to Moses in a bush that burned with fire, and said, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them; and, now come, I will send thee into Egypt. So when Jesus was appointed to his ministry, there came *a voice from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*

The redemption of the people under Moses at the Exodus from Egypt, having already been considered

as a figure of the world's redemption under Jesus Christ, I need not dwell upon it here. I may however observe, that as the servitude of the Hebrews was extreme, and their oppression intolerable, when Moses was raised up to redeem them; so was the power of Satan at its utmost height, over Jews and Gentiles, at the coming of Christ. He was permitted to bind and to oppress after a strange manner the sons and daughters of Abraham. And if we consider the state of the Heathens at that time all over the world, we find them under the grossest darkness of idolatry, and the most abominable corruption of manners: so that Christ was wanted by the world of Jews and Gentiles as much as Moses by the Hebrews in Egypt.

On this occasion, we have before us a remarkable sign attending the mission of Moses; which being insisted upon by St. Stephen must (like all the other ways of God) have its sense and signification. God appeared to Moses in the desert, from a bush which was on fire and yet was not consumed. Which is a sign, first applying itself as an assurance of deliverance from the affliction of Egypt; and secondly, as a pattern of the incarnation, when God should come down from heaven to redeem the whole world.

The burning bush was an earnest and a pledge to assure Moses, that the people of God, though then in a low and miserable condition (aptly signified by a thorn growing on a desert) and under a fiery trial in a furnace of affliction, should yet survive it all; as the bush, though in the midst of a flame of fire, was not consumed. According to this model, such should the event be; and such in fact it was, to the Hebrews in Egypt. As God was present in the bush which was not burned, so being present with his people in

their fiery trial, and as it were partaking with them in their sufferings, they would certainly be delivered out of them: according to those words of the prophet Isaiah; *in all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them:* which passage some of the Jewish commentators themselves have properly applied to this exhibition of the burning bush, as a sign that God was with his people in their afflictions, to defend and preserve them in the fiery trial.

And if this wonderful spectacle was a sign that God was with *them;* surely it was also a sign that he would be with us in a like form for the salvation of the world from the bondage of sin: that, as the thorn of the desert is the lowest amongst the trees, so should he take upon himself the form of a servant, the lowest condition of humanity; submitting to serve with us, and be afflicted in all our afflictions; that in and with him we might be enabled to sustain and survive the sharpness of death. That, as the children in the furnace of fire felt no harm because the Son of God was with them in the midst of it; so should not we be consumed by the trials of this world or the fire of judgment itself. Herein was it also signified, that the manifestation of God to man should not be that of a consuming fire, but of a benign light and glory instead of it; *a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel.* It was signified, that wrath was turned away; that God was reconciled, and that there is *good will* to man from him that *dwelt in the bush* *.

This appearance of God to Moses is such a testimony to his appearance afterwards in the flesh, that if we lay the whole together as a figure of the poverty of his birth, like that of a root out of a dry ground; of

* Deuteronomy xxxiii. 16.

the servility of his condition; of the thorns he bore at his crucifixion; of the glory and brightness of his transfiguration; of the misery of man; the condescension of God; the necessity of a redeemer: in all these things met together in this exhibition of the burning bush, I see a complication of wonders, which cannot worthily be spoken of: we must adore the subject as we can, and leave it to the more adequate contemplation of angels.

The work of Moses in delivering his people was attended with a display of divine power, which shewed how it should be in the other case. *He brought them out,* saith St. Stephen, *after he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.* So it may be said of Jesus Christ in the words to the same effect, "he "brought them out after he had shewed wonders and "signs; casting out devils, healing the sick, raising "the dead, feeding a hungry multitude in a wilder-"ness, and giving every possible demonstration of a "divine power, exercised for the deliverance and "salvation of the people of God."

The power of Moses in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, was as visible as the sun in the heavens; and it was as plain and certain that he acted by the finger of God, as that he acted at all. But now the argument of St. Stephen leads us to observe, as one of the greatest of all wonders, how this man of might and wisdom, so miraculously preserved, and so highly commissioned, was understood and received by the people to whom he was sent? For if the forefathers of the Jews had rejected their lawgiver thus commissioned, and attested by all the evidences of divine power; then was it so far from being any objection against Jesus Christ, that they had misunder-

stood him, and hated him and crucified him; that it was requisite to the truth and divinity of his commission, that his *brethren* should *sell* him, and *cast him out* as they had done to *Joseph;* and that they should *refuse* him, as they had *refused Moses.* With this argument St. Stephen pressed the Jews, till they were unable to bear the force of it: and, I declare, I think it so forcible at this day, that a man must either be a Christian upon the strength of it, or fall into a rage, like the Jews, if he has an interest against it. Hear how the case is represented—"*This* Moses whom "they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a "judge, the same did God send to be a ruler and a "deliverer by the hands of the angel which appeared "to him in the bush"—He supposed that his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not —"This is he——to whom our fathers would not "obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts "turned back again into Egypt."

What the high priest and the people of the Jews, before whom St. Stephen pleaded, must have felt in their minds from such a representation as this, when the fact of rejecting Jesus Christ was fresh upon their memories and consciences, is more easy to be conceived than expressed. There is no occasion on which the mind of man feels more miserable, than when it is convicted without being converted. Such was the case with St. Stephen's hearers; so they acted like men that were possessed; they gnashed with their teeth, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him in a fury to put him to death: for so doth bigotry dispose of those whom it cannot answer.

Let us suppose, however, that some one amongst the rest was prevailed upon to apply the cases of

Joseph and Moses, as St. Stephen had stated them, to what had lately come to pass in Jerusalem: then would he have reasoned with himself in some such words as these.

Jesus of Nazareth offered himself to our nation as the true Messiah and the king of the Jews: yet none of our rulers or priests or pharisees believed on him, but hated him and despised him. What then? Was not the holy patriarch Joseph, with all his innocence and virtue, hated of his brethren, and persecuted for envy? One of the disciples of Jesus betrayed and sold him for a sum of money, and he was delivered to the Romans as a slave and a malefactor: but so did Joseph's brethren sell him, and so did that innocent victim go down into Egypt among heathens as a slave, and was imprisoned as a malefactor under a false accusation. Yet did God bring this same Joseph to honour, and made his family who had despised him bow down before him; as, they say, God has now exalted this same Jesus, and that every knee is to bow to him. Many and mighty were the miracles of Jesus, such as we could not disprove, and such as were proper to shew that he was the expected redeemer: but we who were witnesses of them did not accept of them as such. Thus did our lawgiver Moses come forth to avenge our wrongs upon the Egyptians, supposing that his brethren would understand, from the part he took, that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not; they accused him for what he had done, and took part with the Egyptians, as we have taken part with the Romans, our task masters, against Jesus Christ. When Moses undertook to compose the differences of his brethren and restore them to peace, the aggressor flew in his face, and questioned his authority with those

saucy words, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? Thus did we insolently demand of Jesus on every occasion, who gave him his authority; instead of submitting to it, and taking advantage of it for our own good. We represented him not as a saviour, such as his works proved him to be, but a destroyer (as they made Moses a murderer) an accomplice of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils and the destroyer of mankind. Thus have we done unto him as our fathers did unto Moses: Yet was Moses sent of God to bring us out of Egypt; and therefore so was Jesus sent to save his people from their sins. When Moses had overthrown the Egyptians and led our Fathers into the wilderness, the people would not obey him, but turned back in their hearts into Egypt, the scene of all their misery: and if we thrust Jesus from us, it must have been owing to the same cause, a vile attachment to this sinful world, which holds us in bondage, and has made us take part against him with our tyrants and oppressors.

"Upon the whole then, our refusal of Jesus Christ "can be no argument against him. Moses was un- "doubtedly sent to be a ruler and deliverer, and we "all believe it; yet he was refused by the people "whom God sent him to redeem: and though they "had been witnesses of all his mighty works, their "hearts were not converted. So it hath been with "us now; and therefore woe be unto us! *we are "verily guilty concerning this our brother;* and what "is most to our shame and confusion, our guilt is of "such a form as to turn against ourselves, and prove "the very thing that we have been so forward to "deny; namely, that he who was sold like Joseph, "hath like him received favour and dominion; that "he who hath been affronted, and refused, and thrust "away by us, as Moses was, is the true lawgiver

" whom we have thus conformed in all things to the " example of our prophet; even of that Moses, who " said, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up " like unto me; and we have done all that was want- " ing on our part to make the likeness complete."

Thus must they have reasoned, on whom St. Stephen's argument had the proper effect; and thus would the Jews reason at this day, who know the Old Testament and have heard the history of Jesus Christ, if they were not under a judicial infatuation, which God can remove when it is just and fit. We who are not under the like blindness can see how plainly and irresistibly these figures of the Old Testament shew the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed. When Stephen disputed with the Jews, he took advantage of this evidence, and *they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake.* When we hear of the effect of this disputation, and find nothing in his speech but a mere narrative of facts compiled from the scripture, we wonder how the Jews could be so provoked by it, more than by reading the bible according to their daily custom: but when we see how all this is pointed as a testimony to the sufferings and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth, the wonder ceases; and it is no longer strange, that they whose hearts were not turned to good by it, should be provoked to rage and persecution.

This subject will suggest some important reflections, which I must beg of you to take into your serious consideration, and lay them up in your hearts as long as you live.

I. From the cases of Joseph and Moses, and more particularly from that of Christ himself, we are to learn, that the qualifications which recommend a person to God, will not make him acceptable or respectable with men, but often the contrary; for amongst

men, innocence is envied, godliness is despised, zeal discouraged, and justice hated. Whence it has been established by wise and virtuous men as a maxim founded on experience, that the voice of the multitude is never to be regarded as a test of truth or merit. Fashionable error is a dreadful enemy to the advocates of truth: and there never was an age or country in which error did not get into fashion, and take the direction of men's minds; so that truth has but a poor chance without an overruling Providence to second and enforce it. We have a famous passage to this effect from the greatest moral philosopher of the Greeks, who declared with a kind of prescience, that if a man perfectly just were to come upon earth, he would be *impoverished,* and *scourged,* and *bound as a criminal,* and, *when he had suffered all manner of indignities, would be put to the shameful death of suspension or crucifixion* *. There is not a more spotless character in the Scripture than that of Joseph: yet his brethren hated him, and their envy had no rest till they had sent him out of their sight as a slave. Moses was a pattern of meekness, and with a struggle of diffidence undertook his commission; a commission, with which he should have been received by a poor oppressed people, like, what he was in fact, a messenger from heaven. But they railed at him, as if he had only made that condition worse which was bad enough before; so had provoked those who were already enraged, and had *put a sword into their hands to slay*

* Several of the fathers have taken notice of this extraordinary passage in Plato; looking upon it as a prediction of the sufferings of the *Just one* Jesus Christ; and after them it is noted by *Grotius de verit.* Lib. 4. sect. 12. *Casaubon* (Merick) has a learned and excellent Criticism upon it, in his Treatise *Of Credulity and Incredulity,* p. 135, &c.

them. Thus the fearful and unbelieving (who are sometimes found amongst the wise ones of this world) are always disposed to discourage and condemn a zeal for the cause of God and the rights of his religion, as indiscreet, unseasonable and dangerous. Whence it follows, that if we are called upon to act in any public character, we must do people good against their will, and take the chance of being ungratefully or even despitefully treated for it. None but the mean-spirited, or the ambitious, or the insipid, or the hypocritical, are spoken well of by all men; and popular applause is the grand object of a vain or knavish disposition. Therefore the Christian is wisely admonished, to seek that praise which cometh only from God; which is never bestowed upon false merit, and will never be wanting to the true.

2. From the example of the Jews, who were only irritated by St. Stephen's arguments, when they ought to have been converted; we see what a dreadful thing it is to have our reasons for hating and rejecting the truth. It is of infinite consequence that we should enquire what that meaneth—*they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* What can be plainer than truth? And what is more amiable? And if it *saves* us, what in all the world is half so valuable? Yet that saving truth is the only truth men cannot of themselves understand: and if they do not understand it, what fearful commotions are raised by it. It is a powerful drug, which will either embitter and inflame the mind*, or restore it to reason. The bigotted Jew, the ancient heathen, the modern infidel, the man of levity and pleasure, are all upon a level, all equally adverse to the Christian plan of salvation; all

* *Stultos facit insanos.* TER.

equally restless and impatient when the proofs of it are laid before them. Even *Paul* himself (who from the part he took when the blood of *the martyr Stephen was shed*, must have been present at the trial) could hear the martyr's apology without being persuaded by it: that very man, who afterwards struck into the same way of interpretation, and delighted to apply the figures of the law as a testimony to Jesus Christ. There was a time when he was not only deaf, but inveterate, and as he said, *exceedingly mad* against the Christians, and all their arguments. Stephen might look like an angel, and reason like an angel: nothing could touch him. He had an opinion, that the Christians were wrong, and deserved to be persecuted: but opinion is that judgment which a man forms of the things of God without the grace of God. When Stephen had reasoned with his hearers, he prayed for them; and perhaps the conversion of that glorious instrument of God, the blessed apostle St. Paul, might be granted in consequence of that prayer.

3. We are lastly to learn from the deliverance of the Hebrews under Moses, which God was pleased to accomplish by his hand, after all the contempt and opposition he had met with; that, however the Church, in bad times, may be corrupted and oppressed, and even averse to its own deliverance; yet the counsel of God is sure; and He who hath promised to be with it *to the end of the world*, will never forsake its interests. Kings, with their statesmen and politicians, may be jealous of its rights, and invade them without fear or shame: nay, the time may come, when the very idea of a divine authority, either in priests or kings, shall be as hateful among Christians, as Moses and Aaron were to Pharaoh and the magicians of Egypt: and there are too many amongst us

already, who cannot speak of it with patience. But the powers of the world can proceed no farther than God shall permit; and when things are at the worst, and seemingly past remedy, then will the *time of the promise draw nigh;* God shall interpose in what form and manner he sees best; and the Church shall be conducted to glory and liberty, as the afflicted Hebrews were led forth to the possession of the land of Canaan.

LECTURE X.

ON MIRACLES; PARTICULARLY, THE MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, AS THEY BELONG TO THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE SCRIPTURE.

We are prepared to consider the miracles of the gospel, as descriptive of something beyond themselves: because we have already seen how the miracles of Moses, for the saving of the Israelites, are applied in the New Testament, as figures of the saving of all mankind by Jesus Christ. Our Saviour applied the lifting up of the serpent by Moses in the wilderness, to the lifting up of himself upon the cross, to draw all men unto him for the cure of their souls. The Apostle tells us, that the rock which Moses smote, to give drink to the people, *was Christ;* that is, a figure of Christ, smitten for our sins, and giving to a thirsty world the waters of life. Moses fed the people with manna; but that manna was a figure of the *true bread from heaven which giveth life unto the world.* These things were our examples: the miracles wrought for them were signs of the miracles to be wrought for us. And as it was under the law, so it is under the gospel: the miracles of Christ are not of any private interpretation; but, like the miracles of Moses, with a miraculous effect carry a miraculous signification.

And now, for the right understanding of this whole matter, we are to consider that the name of *Jesus* was given, because he who bore it was to *save* his people *from their sins.* Sin is the great distemper of

man, and salvation from sin is the great deliverance. The want of grace is the greatest want of man, and therefore grace is the greatest gift of God. To save us from sin, and restore us to grace, was the great work which Jesus Christ descended from heaven to accomplish. Every word and every action of his life tended either to effect this, or to give us a right understanding of it: therefore, when we see him working miraculous cures upon men's bodies, we are still to consider him as the Saviour of men's souls; and that he cured their bodies as a pledge to assure us thereof.

As this is a matter of infinite importance toward the advancement of a Christian in the true knowledge and spirit of the gospel, and not so obvious to common understandings, I have reserved it to my last expository lecture, that you may take advantage of all that has gone before: and when you see into the figurative intention of the miracles of Christ, you will want no more of my instructions concerning the language of the scripture.

The wonders which Jesus Christ wrought upon earth in the course of his ministry were all of a particular sort, because more ends than one were to be answered by them. The world was not only to believe the fact of his heavenly mission, but to understand the design and object of it. Any supernatural act would have shewn, that he was invested with supernatural power; but as the object of his commission was to *save* mankind from their *sins*, all his miracles were *signs* of salvation towards the bodies of men; all explanatory of his great work in redeeming their souls from the fatal effects of sin. He went about *doing good;* and according to the present state of things under the fall, to do good, is to remove

evil; to save mankind is to undo and *destroy the works of the devil*. The worst of these take place upon the soul; but we cannot apprehend them without some help, because the soul is invisible. When we speak of the faculties of the soul, we are obliged to borrow our words from the faculties of the body; so the evils and distempers of the soul must be signified to us by the evils and distempers of the body: and both of these proceed from the same cause; for had there been no sin in the soul, there would have been no death in the body. The bodies of men fell into infirmities along with their souls: and it was of God's mercy that it so happened, for we, who take all our notions of the soul and its operations from those of the body, could not otherwise have understood the distempers of the mind: whence it too frequently happens, that they who never were sick, are apt to be ignorant of the weakness of the inward man, and so become confident and self-sufficient—*thou sayest I am rich, and have need of* nothing, *and knowest* not *that thou art* wretched, and *miserable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked* *.

When man was first placed in paradise, his body was in health, and his soul had all its faculties in perfection: and if we would know what a perfect soul is, we must consider what a perfect body is. When the body of man is in a state of perfection, its senses are all perfect. Its sight is quick and strong; its hearing is uninterrupted; its limbs are vigorous and active; it distinguishes all tastes and all odours without error, and in its feelings it is sensible of all the impressions of the elements. So when the soul is in equal health, it sees and understands things spiritual; it sees God and his truth as plainly as the

* Rev. iii. 17.

eye sees the light of the day; it hears and attends to all important and useful information: it walks with God in the way of his commandments, and even runs with pleasure to do his will, as the angels fly through the heaven for the same purpose: it distinguishes good and evil without error; and, apprehending their different effects and consequences, it relishes the one and abhors the other: its speech is employed in the praises of God, and will be telling of his wonders from day to day, for it knows no end thereof; it therefore preserves its relation to God, as his *child*, his *scholar*, his *subject*, in *affection*, *attention*, and *obedience*. O blessed state! who can survey this condition of humanity without bewailing its loss, and aspiring to its restoration? For lost it was; and under that loss we are now suffering; and as such sufferers we were visited by Jesus Christ. When sin entered, man fell from this perfect state of mind, into ignorance, and blindness of heart; inattention to divine knowledge and instruction; aversion to spiritual things; error of judgment; insensibility of the consequences of good and evil; and inability, as well as indisposition, to do the will of God. His soul is as a body maimed and distempered: for sin is not only a defect, but a positive disease, including the nature of all the diseases incident to man. The eyes of his mind are blind; its ears are deaf; its tongue is dumb; its feet are lame; its constitution infected with foul distempers: it is agitated with vain cares, cheated with vain pleasures, and distressed with emptiness and want. When the apostle had this subject before him, well might he exclaim, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* For the life we have upon these terms as natural men, is rather death than life; and so the gospel hath con-

sidered it: we are *dead in trespasses and sins*, and the world in which we live is dead unto God.

Now as Jesus Christ came to restore us from this state of disease and death into which we are fallen, all his mighty works present him to us as a deliverer from *these evils*; and therefore while his miracles were *evidences* of his own divine mission, they were *signs* of our *salvation*. They all spake the same sense; and our Saviour himself hath given us a key to the right interpretation of them all: who, when he was about to give sight to a man born blind, did not proceed to the cure, till he had instructed his disciples in the sense of it, in such terms, as could not be applied to it as a bodily cure. "As long as I am in the world, I "am the light of the world," as if he had said, "I "give light to this man born in darkness, as a sign "that I give light to mankind, who are all born in "the like state. This man is but an individual; and "all the persons to whom I shall restore their bodily "sight are but few: but a spiritual discernment in "the eyes of the mind is necessary to all mankind; "therefore I who give it am a *light* to the *whole* "*world*, and I give sight to this man as a *sign* of it."

That the miracle might be more instructive, a very peculiar form was given to it. He moulded the dust of the ground into clay, and having spread it upon the eyes of the man, he commanded him to go and wash off this dirt in the pool of *Siloam*. Here the reason of the thing speaks for itself. What is this mire and clay upon the eyes, but the power this world has over us in shutting out the truth? Who are the people unto whom *the glorious light of the gospel of Christ* cannot *shine*, but they whose minds the *God of this world hath blinded*? So long as this world

retains its influence, the gospel is *hidden* from the eyes of men; they are in a *lost* condition; and nothing can clear them of this defilement, but the water of the divine Spirit *sent* from above to wash it away.—This seems to be the moral sense of the miracle: and a miracle thus understood becomes a sermon, than which none in the world can be more edifying. Our Saviour himself preached in the same way to his disciples, to instruct them in the nature of his mission, and of their own salvation. In short the gospel is sealed up, and a man may as well read a modern system of morality, unless he sees that Jesus Christ is the physician of human nature, and that a miserable and sickly world is in daily want of his healing power.

The same spiritual turn is given to the miraculous distribution of bread in the wilderness. Christ informed the people, that if they followed him only to eat of this bread, for the feeding of their bodies, they mistook the nature of the miracle. *Ye seek me because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.* The meat he then gave was only a figure of that which he gives in a higher sense to all that believe on him, and which is *meat indeed;* no other in comparison of this being worthy of the name. By *bread* our Saviour sometimes means the doctrine of the gospel, which nourishes the mind; and sometimes his own body spiritually taken in the eucharist: but whether we here understand the bread of the Lord's supper, or the preaching of the word; both are distributed to the hungry multitude of mankind in the midst of this desert: and a sort

of food this is, which, like the manna laid up in the tabernacle (called the *hidden manna**) never perisheth, but nourisheth the soul to life eternal.

From the curing of the blind and the feeding of the hungry, let us proceed to the raising of the dead. It appears to us as a most wonderful thing, that a dead man should hear the voice of Jesus Christ and return to life: but it is more wonderful that the grace of God and the calling of his gospel should revive a man dead in sin; because, to speak after the manner of men, it seems harder to revive a dead soul than to raise a dead body. And now observe the order of things. The first transgression brought with it a present death to the spirit of man, and a future death to his body. The power of the gospel brings a present life to the spirit, and a future life to the body; and as the renovation of the spirit is the greater in effect, and most necessary to be understood, the restoration of a dead body, which is more striking to the senses, is exhibited as a visible sign of it. The scripture therefore in many places speaks of the conversion of the soul to a life of righteousness as a rising from the dead; as in Eph. v. 14, where the apostle paraphrases these words of the prophet Isaiah, *arise, shine, for thy light is come*, and gives their full meaning to them; *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*†. Here

* Rev. ii. 17.

† This is delivered as the sense of the prophet, because it is ushered in as a quotation, *wherefore he saith* or *it* (that is, *the scripture*) *saith*. The language of the prophet is an allusion to the rising of mankind from sleep when the sun rises upon them in the morning; but as the prophet doth not speak according to the letter, the light is the true light of the world, and the sleep is the sleep of death, either natural or spiritual: and so the apostle hath only translated the words of the prophet from the letter into the spirit, and given them their true meaning.

the dead are of the same sort with those spoken of by Christ in the gospel, *let the dead bury their dead;* of whom the former are the dead in spirit, and the latter the dead in nature. The word *death* has the like sense in the sentence which was pronounced on man in paradise, *in the day thou eatest thou shalt die:* and there are numberless passages of the Old Testament, in which the words *life* and *death* do not signify the natural, but the spiritual life and death. I know not how to understand, but by admitting both a natural and a spiritual resurrection, those other words of Christ, *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;* for certainly, the resurrection which *now is* must be that figurative resurrection spoken of by the prophet and apostle; and the margin of our bibles accordingly refers us to such passages as speak of a quickening unto grace. I cannot but understand the raising of Lazarus from the putrid state of death, as a sign that the same power should revive men who had been long dead in trespasses and sins, and seemed to be past grace; as was the case with the whole heathen world.

In the raising of the widow's son at the city of Nain, we have a lesson of this kind worthy of our consideration. "A dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her." This was a funeral of some pomp, and so we may suppose the young man was a considerable person. Thus, alas, do we see many sons of the church, in the prime of life, in their best days, who seem to know no more that Jesus Christ is near to them, than if they were stretched out upon a bier. Such examples are too often found in low life; but they are much more common among young men of station and fortune; too many of whom

are totally insensible to the things of God; lifeless and stupid at prayer; and as indifferent to the word of God from a reader or a preacher of it, as if they did not hear one word that is spoken, and had no concern with that other world, to which, young as they are, time is in the mean while carrying them out; though they may seem to move slowly on, as is the custom in a funeral. Nothing less than that same power which raises the dead can awaken such to hear that voice which is daily calling unto them in the words of the gospel, *Young man, I say unto thee arise:* hear now the voice of him that hath pity upon thee, and calls thee to rise and be saved; because thou wilt soon be forced to hear that other voice, which shall bid thee rise from the earth to be judged for thy sins.

The cure of sin in all its symptoms and effects is signified by other like miraculous works; such as the deliverance of the body from bondage and imprisonment, from uncleanness, from weakness, lameness, deafness, poison, and madness, or the possession of the devil: all which are so fulfilled in the deliverance of the soul from sin, that the prophets seem rather to have predicted the salvation of which the miracles were signs, than the miracles themselves: that is, they seem to have predicted the miracles rather in the spiritual sense than the natural.—Thus where Isaiah * describes the conversion of the Gentiles as a *blossoming of roses* in a *desert*, and a sound of joy and *singing* in a lonely *wilderness;* it follows, that *the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man shall leap as a hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing,* &c. all of which expressions must be applied to the souls of men; for if we under-

* Chap. xxxv.

stand any of them literally of the body, we shall make the passage inconsistent with itself; or, to make it uniform, we must suppose, that the gospel should be revealed to multiply flowers in a wilderness. Therefore, the inference is easy; that the works of giving sight to the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, &c. though certainly to be performed by our Saviour in the letter, were to be no more than signs of the salvation foretold by the prophet.

The misery of man under sin, is like the bondage of an imprisoned captive; and the liberty of those who are made free by the Son of God under the gospel, is like that of a person miraculously brought out of prison. As such the prophet speaks of it, in a passage which our Saviour has applied to his own ministry. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, "because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings "unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the bro- "ken hearted, to proclaim *liberty to the captives*." Who are these captives? Did Jesus Christ come to publish a gaol-delivery to debtors and felons? by no means: but he delivers those who are *appointed unto death*, and are *tied and bound with the chain of their sins:* and to give an assurance of it to all men, he miraculously opened the doors of a dungeon, and delivered his servants from their bonds. When this happened to Peter, he supposed it to be a vision: when the Lord thus *turned his captivity, he was like unto them that dream;* but he came to himself, and *considered the thing;* and seeing farther into the wisdom of God than we do, he probably considered the whole as a scenical representation of that deliverance, which is wrought by him who was sent to *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*

Sin appears to us in another form, as a loathsome distemper, like the leprosy, which descended by inheritance, and incrusted the whole body with a foul humour. So doth that sin, which is in the constitution of man, bréak out and discover its offensive nature. This distemper therefore the great physician condescended to cure, either by his word alone, or by a miraculous *washing*, to denote the salutary effect of *baptism*. The purification of the Gentiles had been signified long before by the *cleansing of Naaman the Syrian*, who was ordered to *wash seven times in Jordan*. He supposed, that if water would cure him, the rivers of Damascus would have done as well; but he was taught, that *salvation* was *of the Jews*, the water that could effect his cure was to be taken from Jordan, where Christ should be baptized; and his baptism was a prelude to the baptism and conversion of the heathen world; whose distemper was afterwards transferred to the worldly-minded Jews, as that of Naaman was fixed upon Gehazi, the covetous attendant on the prophet. To shew that this cleansing by baptism should not take place upon the Jews, but the Gentiles, our Saviour hinted to those of the synagogue, that there were many lepers in Israel when this happened, and none of them were cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian. The Jews could bear to hear of any thing rather than the acceptance of the Gentiles; and seeing his meaning they were filled with rage, and would have cast him down headlong as an enemy to his country.

Other miracles of Christ were intended to shew how the power of God is necessary to help the impotence of man. He must open our lips before we are able, and furnish us with matter before we know how to praise him or pray to him; therefore the

tongue of the dumb was loosed, and even babes and sucklings were empowered to utter hosannas to his name. The deaf were made to hear, because men have ears which neither hear nor understand, nor can attend to the words of divine wisdom, till God has opened them: of which there are many lamentable examples in the gospel, and I wish there were none at this day.

The lame were made to walk, because *the way of man is not in himself;* it is God alone that enableth us to walk, yea, to run with pleasure and swiftness, as the feet of a hind, in the way of his commandments. In short, all the faculties of man are useless in the service of God, like the limbs of one sick of the palsy, which cannot lift or move themselves till some new strength is communicated. The prophet instructs us how this should be when God should be revealed: *strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees;* or, as the apostle words it, *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make strait paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed:* * which terms are all applied in an intellectual sense to the minds of weak Christians.

Another miracle of Christ, and one of the most considerable, is that of relieving the possessed by casting out evil spirits: the design of which is to teach us, that there is a spirit *working* in the children of disobedience (the Greek signifies *possessing* † them) which nothing but the power of the gospel can cast out. When we observe how strangely men err in their judgments; how they hasten towards their own

* Heb. xii. 13.

† Ενεργουντος; the common name of demoniacs, or possessed people, was Ενεργουμενοι, *Energumeni.*

destruction, maiming their bodies and ruining their fortunes by their vices, as if they *hated their own flesh*; preferring nakedness and wretchedness, and loathsome diseases and infamy, to peace, honour, health, and happiness; we must conclude they are under the working of some malignant power, beyond the mere depravity of nature: for nature would always act in men, as it does in brutes, on a principle of self-preservation. Such as were possessed by the devil uttered horrible noises, and chose a miserable residence amongst the tombs of the dead. And bad as such a spectacle may be, it is not a worse example of Satan's power, than when we hear miserable men crying out for curses to descend from heaven, inviting the blastings of lightning on their enemies, or their friends, or themselves; on their souls as well as their bodies. To live naked among the tombs is not a greater symptom of possession, than to fly from God, and his light and truth, and seek after the ways that lead to death. To bruise the flesh in frantic fits of despair, is not worse than to injure the health of the body with such excess and riot, as wastes the flesh, and brings wounds and bruises and putrifying sores: yet the world, who are shocked at a madman, look with unconcern on this moral insanity, because the case is common.

It is a symptom of madness when a man delights in mischief: and how many do we see, who have no greater diversion, than to impose upon the innocent, and terrify people with vain fears, or mock at them when they are betrayed into real dangers.

The wise man, considering how fools make a mock at sin; how outrageous men are in their mirth, how perverse in their ways, how corrupt and irrational in their pleasures, pronounces upon them in plain terms;

*the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, yea madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead**. (Ratione expulsa, sensuq. religionis amoto, quæ immanitas, quæ feritas, quæ *dementia* non illico exoritur?)† without true religion to sober them and bring them to a right mind, men are in fact as much out of the way as lunatics; and worse in one respect, that they are still accountable as free agents for that reason which vice has extinguished. The man who does not see and consider that he is come into this world to be saved by Jesus Christ, is an ideot to all intents and purposes in the sight of God. If he is upon his defence against the power of the gospel, and puts it from him with those words of the demoniac, "Why art thou come to torment us?" he is a madman of the first class, to whom the poor lunatic, with a sceptre of straw, is a hopeful character.

Miserable is the condition of men under temptation or possession from evil spirits: but the power of grace sets us free from their terrors, with those comfortable words, *Who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?* As a pledge to assure us of which, our Saviour gave to his apostles an evident superiority over the powers of darkness; *Behold I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you*‡. Who is this *enemy?* The *enemy* of Christians *is the devil;* and such poisonous vermin as serpents and scorpions are the emblems of him and his children. A miraculous power over these creatures which hurt the body, was an outward assurance to the world, that he who wounds the soul shall have no power to hurt a Christian. When the viper

* *Monita et præcepta Christiana*, p. 104.

† Eccles. ix. 3. ‡ Luke x. 19.

fastened on the hand of Paul, he shook him off into the fire from whence he came: and thither, into the element prepared for him, shall the devil be shaken off by the faith of those whom he assaults.

Another great miracle, and the last I shall take notice of, is that of our Saviour stilling the raging of the sea, and delivering his disciples in a storm. We, like them, are embarked with Christ in the ark of his church, and are subject to many dangers and terrors upon the waves of this troublesome world. So long as we are in the world, we shall be exposed to the cares and troubles of this mortal life. Sometimes the elevations of pride and ambition lift us up toward the heavens; at other times disappointment and despair oppress us, and the deep threatens to swallow us up: while the Saviour in whom we have trusted seems to sleep, as if he were leaving us to perish in the storm. But the prayer of faith will at last awake him: we are therefore to trust in the worst of times, that he who rebuked the winds, and the sea, when his disciples cried out, *Lord, save us, we perish*, will after the same example save us when we pray to him; that he will lessen our cares, and quiet our passions, and restore us to peace, so that there shall be a great calm: the winds shall drop, the sun shall shine out, and there shall be peace of conscience, which is the greatest calm in this world.

Thus it appears that all the miracles of Christ have a figurative acceptation. From them we learn all the distempers of our souls, and where we are to apply for the cure of them.

To open this subject still farther I desire you will observe what a curious opposition there is between the miracles of Christ, and the workings of Satan. As the power of Christ was exercised in such works

of salvation as were proper to his character as the Saviour of Souls; so there is a surprising agreement between the outward works of the devil on the persons of men, and his inward works upon their minds: insomuch that his character, as *a destroyer*, is not less evident in the scripture, than that of Jesus Christ as *a Saviour*. From some opportunities Satan had of shewing his power, we see how it is exercised. When some strolling Jews took upon them to deliver one that was possessed, the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leapt upon them, as a lion would leap upon his prey, and they fled out of that house *naked* and *wounded*. He who here strips men, and tears off their clothes, is the same that left Adam naked in paradise; who delights still to repeat the same act, or even to see the shadow of it in nakedness and wretchedness: therefore the poor demoniac, who resided among the tombs, *ware no clothes* *.

When the evil spirits went into the herd of swine, the whole herd ran headlong into the sea and perished. After the same form doth the devil drive men headlong into the gulph of perdition, when he gets the direction of them. He was permitted to possess this unclean herd, that we may thence learn how an unclean life will prepare us to be driven into hell itself by the destroyer. Temperance, sobriety, and devotion prepare our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; but impure manners prepare the heart for unclean spirits, and give them the opportunity they desire. We have heard of certain arts to call up the devil: but a man need only live like a swine, and he will be sure to have his company.

A woman who was bowed together for eighteen

* Luke viii. 27.

years, and could in no wise lift up herself, is said to have had *a spirit of infirmity*, and to have been *bound* of *Satan*: whence it appears, that he is the instrument for inflicting unaccountable diseases. It is his will that none should be able to lift up their minds to heavenly things; and as a sign of it he bows their bodies towards the earth.

Those extreme cases, in which men raged and were thrown about, and torn, and tormented of the devil, were permitted to shew us what his inclinations are toward the souls of all men living: that he would deprive them of all reason; disturb their imaginations with fancies of horror and despair; inspire them with cruelty toward themselves; and drive them from the living God into the regions of the dead. Such are the works of Satan; contrary in every respect to the works of Jesus Christ; and men, as their nature now is, being subject to his power, *exorcism*, or the casting out of the evil spirit, was admitted as a part of the office of baptism, in the primitive church.

I would desire you to observe farther, in regard to our present subject, that the very same images are used in the 107th Psalm as in the miracles of Christ, to express the redemption of men's souls from the effects of sin by the goodness of God. *The redeemed of the Lord* are there called upon to praise him for gathering them out of a wilderness, and satisfying their souls when hungry and thirsty: for breaking their bonds asunder, and delivering them out of prison, where they were bound in affliction and iron, and sat in darkness and the shadow of death: for healing them by his word when afflicted with sickness: for delivering them from the perils of the sea, and making the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. All this scenery is well drawn out, and finely applied,

by a devout and elegant commentator of our own church *, who has made the book of Psalms more useful to pious Christians, than it ever was made since the Reformation; and I may add, before it. From that Psalm, as from the miracles of Christ, we learn the weakness and wretchedness of man, and the goodness of God with the power of his grace. We see the necessity of prayer for the help of God; after the example of those, who *cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and were delivered out of their distress.*

No forms of prayer can be more significant than those which are built upon the miraculous works of Christ. These shew us what our wants are, and thence teach us what we are to pray for: and when we have respect unto them, and the author of them, we mix an act of faith with our petitions, which will never fail to render them more acceptable; for we read, that the power of Christ took effect on those only who had faith to be healed. There is not a want of man, nor any occasion in life, on which the miracles of Christ will not supply us with the finest matter of devotion, and in some such form as the following with which I shall conclude.

" O Son of David, thou great physician of souls, " who didst once exercise thy power in the land of " Judæa, and wentest about doing good; thou art " still with us; and hast promised so to be unto the " end of the world. Have mercy upon us under all " the weaknesses of our nature, and succour us under " all oppression from evil men or evil spirits: deliver " us from the bonds of our sins, and give light to us " when we sit in darkness: open our eyes, that we " may see the things which belong to our peace:

* The Reverend Dr. *Horne*, late Bishop of Norwich.

" give us an ear to hear and understand thy word;
" and a tongue to praise and confess thee before men:
" give strength to our feeble hands, that they may
" be lifted up to thy name, and let our knees be flex-
" ible and ready at their devotions: cleanse us from
" our secret faults, as well as our outward offences;
" feed our souls with the bread of life, and let us
" hunger and thirst, that thou mayest satisfy us. Be
" mindful of us, O Lord, in our distresses, when we
" are tossed about upon the waves of this troublesome
" world: and in all our dangers of soul and body,
" stretch out, to save and defend us, that right hand
" which raised up thy disciple sinking in the mighty
" waters. In all things let our faith be toward thee,
" and then shall thy power and mercy be toward us
" for deliverance and salvation." AMEN.

LECTURE XI.

THE USES AND EFFECTS OF THE SYMBOLICAL STYLE OF THE SCRIPTURE.

Now it hath been shewn what the figurative language of the holy Scripture is, by an induction of particulars; we may proceed to speak with more confidence concerning the uses and good effects of it. We now stand as it were upon an hill, up to which our enquiry hath conducted us, thence to survey the fruitfulness of the holy land. We have seen that the *law*, in its sacrifices and services, had a *shadow of good things to come*; that its history is an *allegory*; that God used *similitudes* by his *prophets*: that Christ spake in *parables*; that the apostles preached *the wisdom of God in a mystery*; in a word, that the whole dispensation of God towards man, is by signs, shadows, and figures of visible things. The law of Moses, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels and Epistles, and most of all the Revelation of St. John, use and teach this figurative language: and therefore, in the use and interpretation of it must consist the wisdom of those who are taught of God. *Here is the mind that hath wisdom*, saith St. John, *the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth*: where the word *wisdom* is applied to this science of decyphering the figurative expressions in the language of the Revelation. So at the end of the 107th Psalm, wherein the salvation of man's soul

is set forth under all the forms of deliverance from bodily dangers, it is added, *whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.* Whatever the form and manner may be after which the divine wisdom is communicated, it must be the best: and such we shall find it when we enquire how the improvement of man's mind is promoted, and all the purposes of God's revelation answered by the use of this symbolical or figurative style of speaking from the images of things.

1. This method is necessary to assist the mind in its conceptions, and supply the natural defect in our understandings. Being men, invested with an earthly body, which hath a sense of nothing but material things, we cannot see truth and reason, in themselves, as spirits do: these things are of a different nature from our sight; and therefore we are obliged to conceive them as they are reflected to us in the glass of the visible forms, and sensible qualities of outward things.

It is the excellence of this mode of speaking that it is not confined to the people of any particular nation or language; but applies itself equally to all the nations of the earth, and is universal. It was not intended for the Hebrew or the Egyptian, the Jew or the Greek, but for *man;* for that being who is composed of a reasonable soul and a fleshly body; and therefore it obtains equally under the Patriarchal, Jewish and Christian Dispensation; and is of common benefit to all ages and all places. Words are changeable; language has been confounded; and men in different parts of the world are unintelligible to one another as barbarians; but the visible works of nature are not subject to any such confusion: they

speak to us now the same sense as they spoke to Adam in Paradise; when he was the pupil of heaven, and their language will last as long as the world shall remain, without being corrupted.

Thus, for example, if we take the word of *God*, we have a sound which gives us no idea; and if we trace it through all the languages of the world, we find nothing but arbitrary sounds, with great variety of dialect and accent, all of which still leave us where we began, and reach no farther than the ear. But when it is said, *God is a sun and a shield*, then *things* are added to words, and we understand that the Being signified by the word *God*, is bright and powerful; unmeasurable in height, inaccessible in glory; the author of light to the understanding, the fountain of life to the soul; our security against all terror, our defence against all danger. See here the difference between the language of words and the language of things. If an image is presented to the mind when a sound is heard by the ear, then we begin to understand; and a single object of our sight, in a figurative acceptation, gives us a large and instructive lesson; such as could never be conveyed by all the possible combinations of sounds. So again, when we are told of a being whose name is the *devil*, we go to the derivation of the term, and find it signifies an *accuser*; and accusation may be true or false. But, when instead of the word, we have *a serpent* as a figure of him, we are aware of his nature, and of our own danger. We understand that the devil is *insidious* and *insinuating*; that his tongue is *double*; and his wounds *poisonous* and *fatal*. When we are told that he is the *prince of darkness*, then we find that he promotes blindness and ignorance amongst men, as darkness takes away their sight; and that

he is contrary to *God*, who is *light*. When the devil is said to be a *lion*, then we understand, that as hunger makes the furious beast wander about the desert in search of prey; so the devil, with an appetite to destroy and devour, is always going to and fro in the earth, to watch and take advantage of the ways of men.

So plain is this sort of teaching, and so effectual, that if I were to begin with the first elements of instruction to a child, I think I would teach this ideal language in preference to all the languages of the world; for this is the life and soul of all the rest, and the best preparation of the mind for receiving the wisdom of God, who hath every were instructed us after this form: which, while it helps the understanding, has a wonderful power to engage the attention and please the imagination. Man from his childhood is strangely delighted with pictures; and the passion lasts to the end of his life: for when the eye ceases to be entertained as a child is, the mind will have its pictures for amusement and learning; and the wisest and greatest among mankind have been captivated by them in all ages.

As philosophy derived much of its influence from the powerful imagery of poetry in the ancient tragedies of Greece; so is the religion of revelation greatly assisted and enforced by its figurative language; always pertinent and instructive: and, on proper occasions, exceedingly sublime and beautiful.

The two ends of poetry, as they are laid down by the greatest master in the art, are *to profit* and *to delight*; to give the best instruction under the most pleasing form. The means it uses for the attaining of these ends, is to inform the mind by presenting to the imagination those pictures and images of

truth, which are to be gathered either from created nature, or the actions of men, and the various scenes of animal and social life. Philosophy and poetry differ in this respect; that the one instructs by words, and delivers its precepts literally; the other by the images of things: and if these images are lively and proper, then the mind is delighted with a moral as the eye with the effect of a picture. Therefore good poetry, under proper restrictions, is one of the greatest and best works of human art; and hath always been accounted divine, as proceeding from the assistance of heavenly beings. Even in the oratory of prose, the method of managing well an allusion or comparison is of great value, because it is of great effect. He is the most agreeable speaker, who can open and adorn the argument of his discourse by some apt representation of truth from the nature of things. But in religious subjects, where it is of the utmost consequence that men should hear attentively, and be persuaded effectually, there this manner is most valuable of all.

How beautiful is that admonition of Saint *James*, from the propriety of the imagery under which the moral is conveyed! He exhorts to govern the *tongue*; which though so small a member of the body, is yet of such good effect, that to govern the tongue is to govern the whole man. "If any man offend not in "word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to "bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the "horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn "about their whole body. Behold also the ships, "which though they be so great, and are driven of "fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very "small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth." Nothing upon the subject can possibly exceed the

eloquence of this passage: and the Apostle carries on his discourse all the way in the same beautiful style of allusion.

How were the lowest among his hearers captivated, when our Saviour discoursed to them in parables; explaining the doctrine of the kingdom of God from the scenes of nature which were daily before their eyes. The constitution of man's mind is still the same, in the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant: and the principle on which it must be engaged to receive instruction can never alter. We are to learn all things by comparison; and the salvation of our souls depends so much on our improvement under this mode of teaching, that it is wisely provided by the author of our nature, that we are so much delighted with imitation in every shape. All the representations of the stage, which attract the multitude, are nothing but imitations of characters and scenes of imagery: poetry, painting, and music all engage the fancy with imitative effects of art. Mirth and sadness, conversation and devotion, the singing of birds and the confusion of a battle, are all imitable in musical sounds.

But this great plan of imitation is no where so conducted, nor carried to such a height, as in the signs and allegories of the holy Scripture, which compose the richest scenery upon earth. If the fancy of man is delighted with imitation even in the smallest subjects, how much more, when the originals are objects of an eternal nature, and the delineation of them is from that wisdom, to which the things of time and the things of eternity are equally known: and which framed this visible world as a counterpart to the other.

Great is the evidence which arises when these two

are laid together and compared; and I have frequently found it such by experience, when I have tried the force of it upon minds to whom it was new. If there be any difficulty in our creed, it is certainly much lessened, if the visible world presents to our senses the figures of those things which God hath proposed to our faith. To those who understand it, all nature speaks the same language with revelation: what the one teaches in words, the other confirms by signs; insomuch that we may truly say, the world is a riddle, and Christianity the interpretation. If Christ is called the *true bread*, the *true light*, the *true vine*, and the talents or gifts of God's grace are the *true riches*, &c. then the objects of sense, without this their spirit and signification, are in themselves mere image and delusion; and the whole life of man in this world is but a shadow, vain and empty, till the *truth* and substance of it is seen and understood. This relation between things visible and invisible we could never have found out of ourselves; but when the plan is proposed, it is so reasonable and striking, that nothing can resist it, but the blindness of false learning, or the malignity of vice, which has an interest against it. In the style of the scripture, the several objects in the visible creation, from the sun in the heavens, through the elements and seasons, the day and the night, the land and the sea, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, down to the grass that springeth out of the earth, and the stones which are scattered upon the face of it, do all fall in naturally as figures to explain and enforce the things that belong to the kingdom of God, and to the soul of man as a part of it. Whosoever meditates upon the world thus applied as a figure of truth, and sees that agreement between nature and revela-

tion which revelation itself hath pointed out to us, will want no miracle to persuade him of the Christian doctrines: for nature itself is Christian, and the world itself a daily miracle; the heavens speak to us, and the earth and all things therein join in the same testimony: so that if all nations were to disbelieve, nature itself would still continue a faithful witness to the truth: if the children of Abraham were to hold their peace, the stones would cry out.

Here we ought to descend to particulars, and shew how the state of nature and the several parts of it agree with the doctrines of the scripture; but there is not room for it on the present occasion: and I have purposely considered *the natural Evidence of Christianity* by itself in two lectures, which open a prospect into that extensive subject, without attempting to penetrate to the end of it; and to them I must now refer you.

To these advantages of the sacred style, I am now to add that which is the greatest of all, and will justify the attention I have bestowed for several years past upon the matter of these lectures; namely, that the spirit of those figures under which the bible delivers to us the things of God, has a power of raising and glorifying, even in this life, the spirit of man; producing an effect upon it, the same in kind with what it shall hereafter experience when admitted into the presence of God. This is a great thing to say; but I learn it of that apostle who laboured more abundantly in opening to us the wisdom of God from the figures of the old Testament. The same was also signified by our Saviour himself in his discourses with his disciples.

St. Paul teaches the Corinthians, that it is the proper business of the Christian ministry to preach

the *spirit* of the law of Moses, and not to rest in the *letter* of it as the Jews did; whose weakness in this respect was foreshewed by what happened to their fathers; who could not look stedfastly on that glory which shone upon the face of Moses: for which reason Moses put a veil upon his face; which veil, saith the apostle, is still upon their hearts in the reading of the old testament. So far was the act of Moses fulfilled upon *them*.

But now with respect to *us* Christians, who see the glorious spirit of the new testament under the letter of the old, we are not like Moses when veiled, as the Jews are: but like Moses when turned to the Lord; and deriving glory to his own face from beholding the light of the divine presence. Just such is the effect of the spirit of the old testament on those who are converted and look towards it, through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the spirit and glory of the law: it occasions a transfiguration in man's nature, and derives glory to it, like to that which fell upon the face of Moses when he had conference with God, and was turned towards him. This is the effect which happens to us according to the sense of the apostle; whose words, though very obscure when taken independent of the context, will be easily understood after what hath been said—"We all, with "open (that is, *unveiled*) face, beholding as in a "glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the "same image, from glory to glory, even as by the "spirit of the Lord;" or, as the margin reads, by *the Lord* who is *the spirit* of the law, as aforesaid. Of all which the sense, in brief, is this: there was a glory on the face of Moses underneath his veil, and there is a glorious spirit under the letter of his law, which they who behold stedfastly are them-

selves transfigured and glorified after the manner of Moses. Whoever beholds the glory of God is himself thereby glorified, as he who looks at the sun is shone upon by it. All we can see of God in this mortal life is in his word: there that light doth still shine which illuminated the face of Moses; and they who behold it reflected *as in a glass* from the figures and ceremonies of his law, are *changed* (Gr. *transfigured*) *into the same image, from glory to glory;* from the glory of the law which appeared in Moses, to the glory of the gospel which appeared in the transfiguration of Jesus Christ *.

A sight of that glory which is in the spirit of the law, is not only our privilege, but is absolutely necessary toward the conversion of a natural man into a spiritual one; if it doth not rather presuppose such a conversion; because a natural man can neither receive nor discern the things of the spirit of God. This was the case of the Jews; they were not able to see the inward spirit of our Saviour's parables; and so, instead of being converted, they were only condemned by it. "Their ears, said he, are dull of hearing, and their "eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should "see with their eyes, and should hear with their ears, "and should understand with their hearts, and should "be converted, and I should heal them." Hence we see, that they who have the spiritual sense which discerns spiritual things, may be *converted* and *healed*:

* Christianis cum legitur (Lex) thesaurus est absconsus in agro—ostendens sapientiam Dei—quoniam in tantum homo diligens Deum proficiet, ut etiam videat Deum, et audiat sermonem ejus, et exaudita loquelæ ejus in tantum glorificari, uti reliqui non possint intendere in faciem gloriæ ejus, quemadmodum dictum est a Daniele; *quoniam intelligentes fulgebunt, quemadmodum claritas firmamenti, &c.* Irenæi, Lib. 4. c. 48. Irenæus has here fallen upon the very same idea with that before us, though he does not collect it from the same passage.

while they who have it not, are only hardened in their unbelief. Instead of improving they grow worse, and are farther from God than ever: "whosoever hath "not, from him shall be taken away even that he "hath." As it was with Christ, in his parables, such to this day will be the success of every preacher of God's word, who keeps up to his profession as a minister of the spirit: if his hearers do not grow better and become spiritually minded, they will grow worse as the Jews did. The spirit of God's word which should *convert* and heal them will never prove to be an inactive indifferent medicine: it will either do good or harm; it will operate either towards life, or towards death; it will make men turn to God or drive them farther away from him: which is a serious and fearful consideration; and I pray to God you may lay it to heart. My only desire is to do you good, and I should be sorry to speak to the condemnation of any one soul committed to my charge. But you see how the case is: as the benefit is great, so is the danger: if there should be darkness where there ought to be light, how great will be that darkness!

Such then is the excellence of the sacred style, that it is accommodated to our capacities, it delights our imagination, and leads us into all truth by the pleasantest way; it improves the natural world into a witness of our faith; it transfigures us from natural into spiritual men, and gives us a foretaste of the glorious presence of God. If these are the effects of it, it must be of infinite value to particular persons in their several studies and professions.

And first, it is absolutely necessary to a Christian preacher: whose doctrine, if it be after the form of the scriptural imagery, will be more intelligible, more agreeable, and more edifying to all sorts of hearers.

If this is the method God hath been pleased to prefer for the teaching of man, it must be the best when one man undertakes to teach another. We have seen how our Saviour's preaching was in the form of parables; how the apostles in their interpretation of the old testament apply it as a figure and shadow of things to come; and how in their exhortations they reason from some parallel case in the ways of nature. And still it will always be found, that nothing has such an effect in preaching, as the skilful handling of some image or figure of the scripture. For truth, as we have often observed, does not enter into men's minds in its own abstracted nature, but under the vehicle of some analogy, which conveys a great deal of sense in very few words: and therefore the best preachers have always taken advantage of some such analogy, after the manner of the scripture itself, which gives us the pattern of all true preaching.

Let me shew you how this is by an example. Suppose a preacher would persuade his audience not to abuse the station in life to which Providence hath appointed them; and not to presume upon the character they may sustain amongst men for a short time here upon earth: he reasons from the transitory nature of worldly things: and this he teaches them to see in a glass, by setting before them the changeable scenery and temporary disguises of men in a theatre. In the world at large, as upon a stage, there is *a fashion* in the characters and actions of men, which *passes away*, just as the scenery changes, and the curtain drops, in a theatre; to which the apostle alludes. The world is a great shew, which presents us various scenes and fantastic characters; princes, politicians, warriors, and philosophers; the rich, the honourable, the learned and the wise: and with these, the servant

and the beggar, the poor, the weak, and the despised. Some seldom come from behind the scenes; others, adorned with honour and power, are followed by a shouting multitude, and fill the world with the noise of their actions. But in a little time, the scene turns, and all these phantoms disappear. The king of terrors clears the stage of these busy actors, and strips them of their fictitious ornaments; bringing them all to a level, and sending them down to the grave, as all the actors in a drama return to their private character when the action is over.

From this comparison, how easy and how striking is the moral. Nothing but a disordered imagination can tempt an actor on a stage to take himself for a king, because he wears a crown, and walks in purple: or to complain of his lot, because he follows this fictitious monarch in the habit of a slave. Therefore let us all remember, that the world, like the stage, changes nothing in a man but his outward appearance: whatever part he may act, all distinctions will soon be dropped in the grave, as the actor throws off his disguise when his part is over. On which consideration, it is equally unreasonable in man, either to presume or to complain *.

One such moral lesson as this, which shews us the real state of things under a striking and a familiar resemblance of it, is worth volumes of dull abstracted reasonings. It captivates the attention, and gives lasting information: for when such a comparison hath once been drawn out, the instruction conveyed by it will be revived as often as the image occurs to the memory.

* See Dunlop's Sermons, vol. 1. on 1 Cor. vii. 31. *The fashion of this World passeth away.*

To the scholar, the symbolical language of the bible is so useful, that every candidate for literature will be but a shallow proficient in the wisdom of antiquity, till he works upon this foundation: and for want of it, I have seen many childish accounts of things from men of great figure among the learned. In ancient times, sentiments and science were expressed by wise men of all professions under certain signs and symbols, of which the originals are mostly to be found in the scripture; as being the most ancient and authentic of all the records in the world, and shewing itself to be such in the form of its language and expression.

How nearly poetry and oratory are concerned with the science of symbolical expression, has already been observed. With this key, a scholar may penetrate far into the arts of poets and orators; and the next thing to composing well is to taste and judge well. But it is also of eminent use for unfolding the religious mysteries of Heathen antiquity.

The Grecian and Roman mythology has been much inquired into by the learned, and is still a great object with them. Whoever considers the form of religious instruction in the church of God, will plainly see, that the mystical or mythological form among the Heathens was derived from it, and set up against it as a rival. It pleased God to prefigure the mysteries of our faith from the beginning of the world by an emblematic ritual: this manner therefore the heathens would necessarily carry off with them; and when they changed the object of their worship, and departed from the Creator to the creature, they still retained the mystical form, and applied it to the worship of the elements of the world; describing their powers and operations under the form of fable and mystery.

and serving them with a multitude of emblematic rites and ceremonies. Because the true God taught his people by mystical representation, they truly would have their mysteries too: and I take this to be the true origin of the fabulous style in the Greek mythology: though it makes a wretched figure in many particulars; as the woolly-headed negro savage does, when we consider him as a son of Adam descended from paradise. The whole religion of heathenism was made up of sacred tradition perverted, a customary ritual, and physiological fable; but the emblematic manner prevails in every part alike; and therefore every scholar ought to be well acquainted with it.

Yet after all, it will be found most valuable to the Christian believer. The knowledge of human languages prepares us for the reading of human authors; and great part of our life is spent in acquiring them. But the interpretation of this sacred language takes off the seal from the book of life, and opens to man the treasures of divine wisdom, which far exceed all other learning, and will be carried with us into another world, when the variety of tongues shall cease, and every other treasure shall be left behind.

We study some human writings, till we are so enamoured with the spirit of them, that it would be the highest pleasure to see and converse with the person, of whose mind we have such a picture in his works. Blessed are they who shall aspire to the sight of God on this principle; for their hope and their affection shall be gratified. They who now see him by faith, as he is manifested to them in his word, shall sit with him in the glory of his kingdom: and then they will know the value of that wisdom, which has led them through the shadows and figures of temporal things, to that other world, where all things are real and eternal.

THE SYMBOLICAL FORM COMMON TO THE WISDOM OF ANTIQUITY, PROFANE AS WELL AS SACRED.

(A SUPPLEMENT TO THE LAST LECTURE.)

It was observed in the foregoing lecture, that in ancient times *sentiment and science were expressed by wise men of all professions under signs and symbols.* I could not pursue this observation in the body of the lecture, as being less proper for the pulpit. But it is pity we should drop a matter of so much curiosity and importance without descending to some examples of what I there advanced.

Whoever enters into the learning of antiquity, or, if already learned, recollects what he has met with, will soon discover, that theologians, moralists, politicians, philosophers, astronomers; all who have made any pretensions to wisdom, have used the language of symbols: as if the mind were turned by nature to this kind of expression, as the tongue is to sounds; and indeed this language of signs is, properly speaking, the language of the mind; which understands and reasons from the ideas, or images of things, imprinted upon the imagination.

All the *idols* in the world, with their several *insignia*, were originally emblematic figures, expressive of the lights of heaven and the powers of nature. *Apollo* and *Diana* were the sun and moon; the one a male, the other a female power, as being the lesser and weaker of the two. Both are represented as shooting with arrows, because they cast forth rays of light, which pierce and penetrate all things.

As the objects, so the forms of worship were sym-

bolical: particularly that of dancing in circles to celebrate the revolutions and retrogradations of the heavenly bodies. It was an ancient precept, προσκυνει περιφερομενος, "turn round or move in a circle when you practise divine adoration:" that is, do as the heavenly bodies themselves do,

—"that move in mystic dance, not without song." MILTON.

We find the sacred dance appointed and practised in the church: where its true and original intention was probably to ascribe to the Creator the glory of the heavenly motions: and the idea might be that of a religious dance, in those words of the psalm, *let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad:* the other parts of the creation being called upon to signify their adoration by their own proper motions; as the *sea* to *roar*, the *trees* to *wave*, the *floods* to *clap their hands.*

The figures by which the constellations and signs are disinguished in the heavens, are mostly symbols of such high antiquity, that we are not able to trace them up to their original. The accounts given of them by the Greeks and Romans deserve no regard, being childish and ridiculous. In many of these the meaning is easy, because they speak for themselves. The *Bears*, inhabitants of the arctic regions, have possession of the northern pole. The *Ram*, *Bull*, and *Lion*, all sacred to the solar light and fire, are accommodated to the degrees of the sun's power as it increases in the summer months. The *Crab*, which walks sideway and backwards, is placed where the sun moves parallel to the equator, and begins in that sign to recede towards the south. The *Scales* are placed at the autumnal *equinox*, where the light and darkness are equally balanced: the *Capricorn*, or wild mountain-goat, is placed at the tropical point from

whence the sun begins to climb upwards towards the north. The *ear of corn* in the hand of *Virgo* marks the season of harvest. The precession of the equinoctial points has now removed the figures and the stars they belong to out of their proper places; but such was their meaning when they were in them.

Royalty and government were from the earliest times distinguished by symbolical insignia. A kingdom was always supposed to be attended with *power* and *glory*. The glory of empire was signified by a crown with points resembling rays of light, and adorned with orbs, as the heaven is studded with stars. Sometimes it was signified by horns, which are a natural crown to animals; as we see in the figure of Alexander upon some ancient coins. The power of empire was denoted by a rod or sceptre. A rod was given to Moses for the exercising of a miraculous power; whence was derived the magical wand of enchanters; and he is figured with horns to denote the glory which attended him when he came down from the presence of God. In the *Iliad* of *Homer*, the priest of *Apollo*, who comes to the Greeks to ransom his captive daughter, is distinguished by a *sceptre* in his hand, and a *crown* upon his head; which is called στεμμα θειοιο, the crown of the God, because the glory of the priest was supposed to be derived from the deity he represented. So long as monarchy prevailed, the sceptre of kings was a single rod: but when *Brutus* first formed a republic at Rome, he changed the regal sceptre into a bundle of rods, or faggot of sticks, with an ax in the middle, to signify that the power in this case was not derived from heaven, but from the multitude of the people, as peers in empire; who were accordingly flattered

with *majesty* from that time forward; till monarchy returned, and then they were as extravagant the other way,

"Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet."

Virgil plainly understands the *bundle of rods* as the ensign of *popular* power, by opposing to it the majesty of monarchy.

"—Non populi fasces, non purpura Regum."

GEORG. II. 495.

The metaphysical objects of the mind, such as the virtues, the vices, the properties and qualities of things, were represented of old with great ingenuity for moral instruction. We have a good specimen of this kind in the emblematical figure of *Time*, which, for any thing we know, may be almost as ancient as time itself. He was figured by the artists of Greece as an old man, running on tiptoes, with wings at his feet, a razor, or a scythe, in his right hand, a lock of hair on his forehead, and his head bald behind; of all which particulars the signification is too well known to need a comment. *Justice* with her sword and scales; *Fortune* with her feet upon a rolling sphere and her eyes hood-winked; *Vengeance* with her whip; *Envy* with her snakes; *Pleasure* with her enchanted cup; *Hope* with her anchor; *Death* with his dart and hour-glass; and innumerable others of the same class, shew what delight men have always taken in painting their ideas after various ways under the images of visible forms, to give substance and force to their thoughts: and painters are but indifferently furnished for their profession without a competent knowledge of these things. The poetical figure called *prosopopœia*, or, *personification*, from whence all these devices are borrowed, is no where so frequently used, nor with so much sublimity, as in the holy

scripture: of which the learned author *De Sacra Poesi* has selected many fine examples.

The enigmatical method of Pythagoras is well known; who was so fond of teaching by signs, that he made use of the letter Y to signify the two different roads of vice and virtue, to one of which young men give the preference, when the age of trial brings them to the point where the way of life divides itself into these two. Certain moral precepts are preserved, which are called the symbols of Pythagoras *. He advises *not to keep animals with crooked claws;* by which he means, that we should not take into our houses and make companions of persons who are fierce and cruel in their nature; such as another author calls θηρια ανθρωπομορφα, *wild beasts in the shape of men.*

The law of the Hebrews appointed the purity of their diet as a pattern and admonition to purity of conversation: after the example of which (for *Pythagoras* was a *Syrian*) he bids us θνησιμαιων απεχεσθαι, to abstain from all such as die of themselves. He orders, *not to stop upon a journey to cut wood;* that is, not to turn aside after things impertinent to the end and purpose of our life. Also, never to make any *libation* to the Gods from *a vine which has not been pruned:* meaning, that no offering would be acceptable but from the fruits of a severe and well-ordered life. He pronounced it a base action to *wipe away sweat with a sword;* that is, to take away by force and violence what another hath earned by his labour. The literal sense of which symbol will not be understood, but by those who know, that the ancients used a flat instrument like the blade of a knife, with the edge of which they wiped away sweat from

* These symbols are printed with Hierocles on the Golden Verses, and are commented upon by Gyraldus.

the skin, and cleared it of the water, &c. after the use of the bath. It was another of his sayings, that it is a foolish action *to read a poem to a beast*, to communicate what is excellent to a stupid ignorant person: which is the same for sense with that figurative prohibition in the gospel, *not to give a holy thing to a dog*, nor to *cast pearls before swine*. To these symbols of Pythagoras the hieroglyphic philosophy of Egypt was nearly related, which *Pierius* hath taken great pains to interpret; and also the fables of Æsop, which teach prudence and wisdom, and shew the colours of vice and virtue, from the instincts of animals.

Sacraments and ceremonies in religion are significant actions, which all nations and all ages have observed in their worship; and the church still retains them; though these latter times (and this unhappy country in particular) have produced a spurious race of Christians, who have thrown off sacraments and ceremonies all together; as if they had consulted with some evil spirit of a beggarly taste. Priests and singers in our church wear a white linen garment as a sign of purity, and to give them a nearer alliance to the company of heaven. Chanting by responses, which is of the first ages, was intended to imitate the choir of angels, which *cry one to another* with alternate adoration. The primitive Christians turned towards the east, in their worship, to signify their respect to the true light of the world. They set up candles in their churches as a sign of their illumination by the gospel: and evergreens are still placed there at Christmas, to remind us that a new and perpetual spring of immortality is restored to us, even in the middle of winter, by the coming of Jesus Christ. The *Cross*, as a *sign* of the Christian profession, hath been in use from the first ages of the gospel.

This affection to symbols in religious worship may be carried too far, and degenerate into theatrical scenery or even into idolatry, (for idols are no other than symbols) but to cast them all off, and strip religious worship naked, is an act of fanatical ignorance, which understands neither the sense of ceremonies, nor the nature of man; whose mind in its present state must either raise itself by the help of sensible objects and bodily gestures, or be in danger of sinking into sullenness and stupidity.

Thus has the use of symbols extended to all times, and wisdom hath been communicated in this form by the teachers of every science and profession. We might wonder if it were not so; when God, from the beginning of the world, taught man after this form; setting life and death before him under the symbols of two trees; and it is both an ingenious and a sublime sentiment in a certain author, that the whole scenery of paradise was disposed into an hieroglyphical school for the instruction of the first man; and that the same plan, so far as it could be, was afterwards transferred to the tabernacle and temple.

END OF THE LECTURES

On the Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures.

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

USE AND INTENTION

OF SOME

REMARKABLE PASSAGES

OF THE

Scripture,

NOT COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD.

ADDRESSED TO THE

READERS OF A COURSE OF LECTURES

ON THE

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

By WILLIAM JONES, M.A.

PREFACE.

In a course of lectures on the *figurative language of the Scripture* (a work which has two characters, according to the fate of all my writings) the tenth lecture treats of the miracles of our Saviour, as *signs* of his saving power upon the *souls* of men; which, to common readers, appear only as miraculous cures wrought upon their bodies. My plan is not complete unless something be added on other signs and significant actions and events, which frequently occur in the Old and New Testament, and are little noticed in these days, though the early writers of the Christian church were not unacquainted with them.

A *sign* is a kind of prophecy, which speaks by things and actions instead of words. When the Jews demanded a sign of Christ *, they meant some miracle; to shew, by an act of divine power, the truth of his divine mission; but he gave them a sign of the prophetic sort, such as I am now speaking of, the sign of the prophet Jonah, swallowed by the fish; of which kind of sign they seemed to have no knowledge; and I have reason to think there are many Christians who know as little about them as the Jews did, and suppose authors to be scarcely in their senses when they treat of them. But all the signs of the Scripture are excellent, if we have a key to them, and will give both delight and edification to people of devout affections.

It hath been shewed, in the second and third lectures, that the great use of Nature, in the hand of God, is to instruct man; and, from the works of Nature, give him a right understanding of such things as are above Nature; and the matter is beyond dispute, because the fact speaks

* Matthew xii. 38.

for itself. Yet, to my astonishment, this is denied, and even scouted by learned men, who profess a critical judgment of all literary productions; though this sublime and delightful method of teaching is notorious throughout the Old and New Testament. But, alas! when they think they see what they call *Hutchinsonian*, though it be exactly what Christians knew and taught above a thousand years ago, gentlemen are seized with such fears and suspicions as do not become wise men; falsely (and I may say, *weakly* in those who ought to know better) ascribing things to *Hutchinson*, which were borrowed from *Origen*. Let any candid man open his eyes, and look into the Bible: he will there discover, that the visible world is a school, in which God teaches us by earthly things the nature of heavenly, as Christ taught Nicodemus. But the Christian, with a mind and an education similar to those of Nicodemus, will see nothing of all this; for which I heartily pity him, because I am sure he suffers a great loss. To what purpose, O man, doth the sun shine upon thee, unless it teach thee to know more truly the Sun of Righteousness, and to rejoice in his light? If not, the sun shines upon thee, as upon beasts and reptiles, to give light to thy body, but none to thy understanding. Whereas the salvation of man, by Jesus Christ, is so great, so inestimable a subject, that the goodness of God throws every thing in our way, which may bring it to our minds, and recommend it to our affections. For this, the sun shines, the winds blow, the grass grows, the springs water the earth, the rain falls from heaven. But it is in the study of the Scripture, as in other sciences, all things are not equally obvious, nor will they appear of equal concern to different people; and there are those who may think I have been throwing away my thoughts, in exploring things too minute and obscure to be understood. When we use a microscope, to examine the minute objects of the creation, ignorant minds may think we are idly employed, and that our objects are insignificant because they are small; but whoever shall examine small things, will find them full of wonders; and that God is every where great in the smallest of his works; agreeably to that wise observation of *Pliny*, *Rerum natura tota est nusquam magis quam in minimis*, his power and pro-

vidence are as manifest in the œconomy of an insect, as in the revolutions of an empire. The philosopher sees wonders in Nature, which the multitude pass by with unconcern; and the botanist explores minutely what others trample under their feet. The wisest and most inquisitive, with the utmost of their application, can see but a part of the works of God; and the most studious reader can understand but a part of his word; among the treasures of which, as in the bowels of the earth, there are gems and precious ores, which lie so deep, that they have never been disturbed by the hand of man. We can produce only so far as we can penetrate; and when we have done our best, the work will not be acceptable to every mind; so far from it, that I dare not yet trust the following discourse with the public; among whom there are too many persons, like the Jews of old, whose eyes if we attempt to open, we shall increase their blindness; and I know, from the experience of my past life, how critical and tender the case is. Such persons I do not mean to hurt, and I should be sorry to offend them. I, therefore, print this Discourse, with a desire, that it should fall into the hands of those only who are prepared, by what they have already seen in the other lectures, to give it due consideration.

A learned and judicious friend (now with God) whose prudence, in my estimation, was almost oracular, had a sight of all the lectures before their publication, and preferred this, in some respects, to the rest; but advised me not to publish it with them at first, lest evil-minded people should take advantage from it, to bring the whole plan into disrepute; but to reserve it till the rest had been considered, and then to let it be seen by my readers. I took the former part of his advice twelve years ago, and now I think the time is come when I may take the latter; imploring the Divine blessing on what I now commit to the press; that, as we see more intimately into the ways of God, we may daily love him more, and serve him better. *Amen.*

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

MANY good Christians, who read the word of God with a desire to profit by it, and have been taught, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning* (Rom. xv. 4.) have their doubts concerning the use of many things they find in the Scripture; not being able to see how they can answer that general design of adding to our *learning*, and thereby leading us to more *patience*, and *comfort*. The apostle takes a passage from the Psalms of David, and understands Jesus Christ to be the speaker of it; and lest we should wonder or be offended at this use of the Scripture, he tells us the rule is general, that the things written aforetime are to be thus applied to Jesus Christ; without which they are nothing to us as Christians, neither shall we find in them the comfort they were intended to give. In the way I shall take of illustrating this doctrine, I shall bring strange things to the ears of some people, and such as they will never be able to receive; yet others, who will receive them, and be edified by them, as primitive Christians were, ought to have a sight of them.

I once met with a person, a clergyman of no mean learning, who, not having observed how things are related to one another in the great plan of redemption, objected to the use of the *Magnificat*, in the

service of the church, as a form that could have no relation to us. The Virgin Mary, he said, being the mother of Christ, might very properly use the words of that hymn, but that they could not belong to us, nor be used by us, with any propriety. To this it was answered, that as Jesus Christ did not come into the world for the purpose of making the Virgin Mary a mother, but to save mankind, every Christian soul has reason to rejoice with her. Christ, who was formed in the blessed Virgin, is also formed in us *; and the mother of Christ, like Sarah, the mother of the promised seed, in her spiritual capacity, is a figure of the church, that blessed Jerusalem; which is the *mother of us all:* so that the words, which were spoken by her, may be used by all Christians, with the utmost truth and propriety. Each of us may truly say, *My soul doth magnify the Lord,* for he, who regarded the Virgin, did regard her for my salvation; that Christ might be formed in me, as he was in her. He that sent away the rich, and accepted a lowly maiden, hath cast off and sent empty away the proud Jews, and condescended to regard and magnify us poor Gentiles. When the promise, made to the church of Israel in our father Abraham, was fulfilled to the blessed Virgin, it was fulfilled to us, that is, to the *seed of Abraham for ever,* which seed are we at this day. Thus is the *magnificat* brought home to us, and the use of it in the church, to the end of the world, is justified.

This example sheweth us, how it may be true, that no Scripture is of any *private interpretation;* that a fact, when recorded in the Scripture, does not *end* in the private parties of whom it is told, but *belongs*

* Gal. iv. 19.

to us and to our children *, and is to be applied to something *beyond itself* †. When the goodness of God is acting for the benefit of some of his saints, and (as inexperience might suppose) for the benefit of them only, his foreknowledge is acting for us all, and a record of the matter becomes *prophetical.* Many passages, therefore, of the Scripture, when properly understood, and discreetly applied according to the rule of the apostle, will turn out to be highly significant, even though they may seem at first sight to have no relation to us; and, in some cases, even to contradict the laws of divine wisdom and justice.

I shall now produce some examples: and, that this may be done in an orderly manner, I shall begin with the case of our father Abraham. We read that he had a son by an Egyptian bond-maid, whose name was *Hagar;* which thing, though contrary to the moral or social law of God, is yet perfectly agreeable to the laws of his providence and the sense of his promises. The apostle has, therefore, treated of this case without any censure; instructing us that the whole is an *allegory,* a prophetical transaction: that in the two persons of *Sarah* and *Hagar* we are to see the two characters of the spiritual and the temporal Jerusalem: and from the conditions and characters of their two children Isaac and Ishmael, we are to learn how it was to be with the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham. The allegory is in force to this day. The children of the bondwoman, who were under the yoke of the law, are even now in that state of servitude, to which they were cast out, along with their mother the Jewish church; and the Gentiles, as the children of the promise, are now admitted to

* Deut. xxix. 29. † 2 Pet. i. 20.

dwell as inheritors in the house of their Father. The case of Abraham's concubinage, thus applied, is still teaching us the will of God concerning Jews and Gentiles, and will continue to do so as long as Jerusalem shall be trodden down, and the Christian church shall consist of converts taken from the Heathen world. The act of Abraham in taking a bond-woman, can never be drawn into a precedent, because no man can be in his circumstances, standing in a prophetic character, as the progenitor of two orders of people, a carnal and a spiritual Israel, the sons of his nature and the sons of his faith, and furnishing us with an allegory, which has been fulfilling in its several parts for more than half the age of this world.

The fraud of Jacob, in obtaining the blessing from his elder brother, is to be accounted for as a prophetical act, under which we have a figure of the Gentiles, as the younger brother, supplanting the Jews, and taking from them that spiritual inheritance which they knew not how to value. The case of Jacob and Esau would admit of an extensive application in all its circumstances. The elder brother is a man of a worldly spirit, and obtains a temporal establishment; while the younger leads a wandering life, as a stranger upon earth, under terrors for himself, and his family, and his flock, from worldly power; all of which was fulfilled in the different tempers and fortunes of the Jews and the Christians. The Jew is still saying in his heart, with the profane Esau, *what profit shall this birthright do to me;* and so takes the provision this world affords for his hope and inheritance, and commonly gets a plentiful share of it.

The *polygamy* of Jacob is to be considered as ano-

ther act, in which the allegory is still carried on; and as such it is no precedent for any man to take a plurality of wives. Jacob, whose name is Israel, is the father, or head, under whom the church was formed, which still bears the name of the *Israel of God*. The twelve patriarchs might have been raised up, if it had so pleased God, from one wife; but they were born of several; of the bond and the free, the ill-favoured and the beautiful, to foreshew the different characters of which the church of God should be composed in different times. In Leah the elder, less beloved and tender eyed, we have the person of the Jewish church, first taken, but not able to see by faith the mysteries of the Gospel. In Rachel, we see a wife well-beloved, as the Christian church was afterwards to be; at first barren, as Sarah also had been before; but at length travailing in pain, and bringing forth sons of sorrow and affliction. Rachel is accordingly represented by the prophet, and the passage is applied by the evangelist, as weeping for those children who first suffered in the cause of Christ. Her spiritual children, by their profession, are in general such as she called that child of which she died, *sons of affliction:* as such they are to consider themselves, and be prepared to act and to suffer in their proper character. As the tender-eyed Leah, was, for an appointed time, fraudulently substituted in the place of Rachel, so was the Jewish church, though not the best beloved, taken first in order: to which case those words of the apostle may be applied, *that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.*

In the lives of the prophets many things are to be found, which seem to be in themselves either super-

fluous or unaccountable; but when such things are considered as the signs of other future things which are of infinite importance to mankind, they assume a different form, and become worthy of the divine wisdom.

This mode of prophesying by *significant actions* was remarkably used under God's direction in the ministry of the prophet *Ezekiel;* where the judgment on Jerusalem is shewn by the boiling of a pot with its *scum:* the profanation of the sanctuary by the death of the prophet's wife: in which, and other like figurative actions, the prophet Ezekiel was *unto them a sign*;* and the people, not being able to see the sense of his actions, said, *wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?*

On another occasion, the prophet Jeremiah was commanded to carry a linen girdle, and hide it in a hole of the earth near the river Euphrates; there to lie till it should be rotten†: as a sign, that the people, whom God had taken to be nearest to himself, should be pulled off from him, and carried away, to be hidden and consumed in a remote land.

With these examples before us, we are to learn, that in like things there is a like intention; and when we see any thing that appears strange and unaccountable, we may assure ourselves there is some wise reason, and that probably of universal concern, at the bottom; in which case we are to ask, as the people did of Ezekiel, *what are these things unto us?* We know that God could have formed Eve of the earth, as he had formed Adam; but his wisdom acted for our information, that we may know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed:

* Ch. xxiv. 24. † Jer. xiii.

he derived the woman from the man, to shew that the church, which like Eve is the *mother of us all*, should derive its existence from Christ, the second Adam; and particularly from the death of Christ, and from the *side* of Christ, as from the sleep and from the side of Adam. The apostle hath taught us that this affair is to be understood as a *mystery*; and that when we speak of Adam and Eve, we speak of *Christ and the Church* in other words. God could have healed Naaman, the Syrian, by a motion of the prophet's hand; but he sent him to wash, and that in a river of the holy land, even in Jordan, where Christ was to be baptized; that from this case the Gentiles might afterwards be convinced, how necessary it is for all men, under the leprosy of sin, to be washed by the waters of baptism, sent into all the world from the land of Judea: the story of Naaman is wonderfully instructive in all its circumstances *. Upon another occasion, the prophet made iron to swim, when the head of an axe was lost in a river. How are we to justify the wisdom of God, in recovering a thing of little value by the exercise of a power so extraordinary? The reason of this, being not in the thing itself, must be found in the use and sense of the thing; and we must ask here, as the people did on the occasion, when Ezekiel acted in a manner they could not account for, *what are these things unto us?* When this miracle is examined according to the rule of faith, we see in it a pledge of our own recovery from the consequences of the Fall, by the power of Christ's death and resurrection. For let us mark the circumstances, and they will speak for themselves †. The sons of the prophets complain of dwelling in a

* 2 Kings v. † 2 Kings i. 6.

place too strait for them; and, as they are at work for their own enlargement, the head of an axe falls from its helve into the river Jordan; and the loss was the worse because it was borrowed; *Alas, master,* said the workman to the prophet, *for it was borrowed!* The prophet, having cut down a stick of wood, casts it in at the place; with which the iron swims, and the man recovers what he had lost. Upon this case let us venture thus to argue, after the manner of the primitive Christians, and we shall not be far from the truth. As the head of the axe, the better part of it, was lost in the water, so did the soul or spirit of man, the better part of him, fall into death the very day on which he undertook to enlarge and improve his condition: and when man loses his soul, he loses what is not *his own,* but that for which he is accountable to God, who hath trusted it to his free will; and, if lost upon a vain experiment, he must be accountable for it, and hath just reason to bewail the obligation he is under. For when the soul of man is lost and sunk, no human power can recover it. As surely as iron rests at the bottom of a deep river, so surely must the soul of man remain for ever under the dominion of death. But as the prophet, by casting in wood, which swims of its own nature, brought up the iron with it, so doth the Son of Man *draw all men unto himself:* the branch of the stem of Jesse was cut down, and cast with us into the waters of death: but as wood, if thrown to the bottom of a river, will rise up again, so could death have no power over him. And thus are we, when sunk and lost, raised up to life by the power of his resurrection upon us. When considered in this way, the power exercised by the prophet gives us as true and philosophical a pattern of the miracle of our salvation, as the whole

circle of nature can afford: and as such I have often reflected upon the case with admiration and pleasure not to be expressed *.

When the widow cried unto the prophet in behalf of herself and her two sons, who were seized by the creditor for bond-men, he could have found means of paying their debt, without multiplying a vessel of oil by a miracle †: but then, our faith would not have been able to learn from the story, how the two sons of the church, the Jews and the Gentiles, are redeemed from the bondage of sin and death by Jesus Christ, the great prophet; to whom the *spirit* was given *without measure*, as the oil was given to that inexhaustible vessel, and *of whose fulness we have all received.* St. Augustin has an excellent discourse upon all the circumstances of this miracle, and applies them as every other commentator will do, who has the Scripture ready in his mind, and interprets by the same rule.

By a miracle of like sense and signification, did our blessed Saviour pay tribute for himself and his disciple from the mouth of a fish *which came first out of the sea* ‡. I have a notion of my own, for which I can produce no authority of any commentator, that the three orders of animals, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea, represent three states of *being:* the fowls of the air, the angelic or spiritual nature, both bad and good; the land animals, the present state of man's life; the fish of the sea, the state of the dead, who are silent and invisible. This may appear strange and visionary to those who have

* Compare what hath been here said with the interpretation of *Irenæus*, lib. v. 17.

† 2 Kings iv.

‡ Matt. xvii. 27.

not considered it: but, if the distinction is founded on the Scripture, then the fish, that *first cometh up*, is he that first cometh up from the dead, as Christ did; the *first fruits of them that slept:* and as he rose for *our justification*, he brought with him our ransom, to be paid for those who have no tribute-money of their own to give. With this sense, the case was worthy of the divine interposition.

There is another miracle of our Saviour, which, when considered in itself, as it stands in the letter of the history, is very difficult, and hath perplexed many commentators; but is easily reconciled, if we take it in its undoubted signification. In the way to Jerusalem our Lord saw a fig-tree, which had nothing but leaves upon it when he wished for fruit; and he pronounced sentence upon it; in consequence of which it soon withered away *. Now a fig-tree is no object of a curse, unless it be for a sign or figure; least of all could this fig-tree be so, because, as the history adds, *it was not yet the season of figs* †; had it been so, they would have been gathered, in which case no fruit could have been expected, and then the tree had not been proper for the use he intended to make of it, as a *sign* of the character and fate of the Jewish church. He was returning in displeasure from Jerusalem, where he had observed the unprofitable state of the people, whose religion was now reduced to a form of words, without any good works; as a fig-tree having leaves but no fruit: and from this example it was to be understood, that, as the fig-tree withered away, so should the fruitless Jerusalem

* Mark xi. 13, 21.

† A fig-tree with us has always figs upon it in some stage or other. If it was not the *time of figs*, they had not yet been gathered; so the tree should have had its fruit upon it.

perish. Its fate is elsewhere signified under the parable of a fruitless fig-tree*, visited for three years (the term of our Lord's ministry among the Jews) and then, after another short trial, to be cut down as an incumbrance to the ground. The parable and the miracle are of the same interpretation. They have long been fulfilled upon the Jews; but they are applicable at all times, in the moral of them, to those persons who bring forth no fruit under the means of divine grace; whose end will be to wither away and be cast out of the vineyard.

I cannot leave this subject of the miracles without mentioning one more from the Old Testament. How often have the prophane and ignorant made themselves merry with the ass of Balaam! We must, indeed, confess, that God could have rebuked the apostacy of Balaam, without opening the eyes of a brute beast to see the heavenly minister of vengeance, whom a mercenary prophet could not see; and to remonstrate against his wickedness with an human voice: but the time was to come, when the eyes of the Heathen world were to be opened, and their voice to condemn the mercenary Jews, who should make themselves the messengers and hirelings of an idolatrous power to bring destruction upon the Christian church. And as Balaam, by his own confession, *fell* away *with his eyes open*, so did the Jews offend against their own knowledge; while, at the same time, they bore testimony against themselves by maintaining the writings of the Holy Scripture. It was not more contrary to the nature of things, that an ass should see an angel, whom a perverse prophet could not see, than that blind Gentiles should be alarmed and brought to repentance by

* Luke xiii. 7.

the preaching of the Gospel; while the perverse Jews, with the word of prophecy in their possession, should see nothing; but beat and abuse those who saw more than themselves: and if the sword of power had been in their hands, they would have killed every Christian upon earth.

I have now some observations to add on *figurative occurrences*, providentially ordained, and recorded for our instruction. Many events related in the Scripture are of such a wonderful character, that they carry with them natural marks of their own truth; and are thereby distinguished from the events recorded in all the histories of the world. To those who have ears to hear, they speak that sense in sign and figure which they relate in words. It is impossible to explain this without examples: and there are certainly more to be found than I can here produce, or would presume to understand. As there are many wonders in Nature, into which no eye can penetrate, so can we discern but in part the manifold wisdom of God in the inexhaustible treasures of his word.

Such occurrences, as I am about to produce, are no where more observable and abundant than in the history of our Saviour's birth, and of his passion. His birth was witnessed by the appearance of a new star; to signify that a new light was come into the world, such as had never appeared before: and it was observed, and followed by wise men from the East, as a prelude to his reception by the Gentiles; while the people of his own country saw nothing, and when he came had no room for him. All the disadvantageous circumstances, under which the blessed Infant was found, prevented not the adoration of those men, who had been conducted to him by this heavenly light; as no offence will be taken against any part of the

Christian plan by those whom the grace of God hath guided to it, and who see his word as a new light risen upon the world.

Our Saviour was born *upon a journey*, and at an *inn*; to shew, that he was to be a *stranger* and a *sojourner upon earth*, as *all his fathers*, the holy patriarchs, were before him; and as all his disciples are called to be after him.

Shepherds, watching their flocks in the field by night, were selected as proper persons to receive the glad tidings of his birth. Their office represents that of the ministers of God, who are to make known abroad what is told them from heaven: and those shepherds will always have the preference, who are found in their office, watching over their flocks.

Even the time of the year in which our Saviour was born was not without its meaning. This happened on the night when the sun passed the winter solstice, and was returning to bring back the increasing light of the spring. The birth of John the Baptist had happened six months earlier; at the season when the sun begins to shorten the days, and his light is daily decreasing. These two seasons are respectively agreeable to the characters of the two persons, and the event of their ministry: with a view to which, it was predicted of both by the Baptist himself, *he must increase, but I must decrease* *.

If we go from the season of his birth to that of his passion, most of the circumstances, preparatory to it and attending it, have their propriety and signification: of which one single fact will be sufficient to convince us. For, as his birth was witnessed by a new star lighted up in the heavens; so at his passion

* John iii. 30.

the light of the day was extinguished at noon, and gave its testimony, that He was the *true light* who was then expiring upon the cross at Jerusalem.

The disciples were directed to the house where the passover of the Lord's supper was to be eaten, by *a man bearing a pitcher of water* *, whom they were to follow, and where he entered they were to enter and make ready. The same direction will serve to the end of the world: for where the water of baptism is found with the living waters of the word and spirit of God, there is the house of God, and there are his mysteries to be celebrated: as, on the other hand, where there is no baptism, there is no church, nor can be any supper of the Lord.

The agony of our Saviour *in a garden*, and the treason of Judas there committed, and his burial in a garden, where he appeared after his resurrection, and was taken for the gardener of the place, are so many natural signs, which refer us back to the garden where that sin began, which brought him to his sufferings. The wood of his cross, which is called *a tree* †, upon which he *bare our sins*, answers to the fatal tree of Paradise which brought sin into the world: the one tree was the instrument of our ruin, the other of our salvation. It was, therefore, ordained, that Jesus Christ should suffer death under the Roman power, and not under the Jewish. When the Jews refused to put him to death in their own way, (which would have been by *stoning*) out of flattery to the Roman governor they ignorantly contributed to the great plan of Providence, and proved Jesus Christ to be the true Saviour, who died for Adam's sin. Thus will it ever happen: the perverse ways of man shall fulfil the

* Mark xiv. 13. † 1 Pet. ii. 24.

righteous designs of God. The crown of *thorns*, which they put upon his head, was another mark to the same effect, and shewed him to be the person upon whom the *curse* of our sin was transferred. This case is singular; the history of mankind does not inform us that this act of cruel mockery was ever practised upon any other sufferer, except of late, amidst the murderous executions in that devoted country, France; where, as we are told, one poor sufferer was crowned with thorns, and treated with the indignities peculiar to the death of Jesus Christ.

The whole race of mankind, for whom Christ suffered, are divided into the two parties of Jews and Gentiles; frequently signified by two individual persons. To represent these, two malefactors suffered with him; of whom one, a pattern of the Gentiles, repented of his error, glorified a suffering Saviour, and received a promise of being taken into Paradise: while the other, like the Jews, went on reviling him, and, in the insolent language of the Jews, bade him *save himself*. The rending of the veil of the temple, when he gave up the ghost, was a sign that his death was the removing of that partition which excludes man from the residence of God, and *opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers*. As to the place or spot on which he suffered death, we suppose it to have happened on that very mountain *(Moriah)* where Isaac had been offered up by Abraham, as a prelude to his death and resurrection; according to the words of a prophecy founded on that event, which strictly signify, *in this mountain the Lord will provide* *; i. e. will provide that true lamb for a sacrifice, which shall take away the sins of the world. Certain it is,

* Gen. xxii. 14.

his death happened *without the gate* of Jerusalem, as the sacrifice was carried *without the camp* to be burned; to shew, in a figure, how he should be rejected as an alien and an outcast by his own people, and delivered over to the Gentiles. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, hath thus applied this circumstance of our Saviour's death; grounding upon it this important lesson, that we must prepare ourselves to be rejected as he was, and *go to him without the camp**, bearing the like reproach of being cast out by the world for his sake, as he was for ours.

As the lights of Heaven had borne their testimony to his birth and his death; so did nature still correspond with his resurrection. He rose from the dead at the springing of the morning, when the day-light was going to appear: on which consideration the rising of every morning should remind us of Christ's resurrection, and of our own deliverance from the grave, when the day of life shall dawn upon us.

When Christ was apprehended by his enemies in the garden, in consequence of the treason of Judas, a remarkable occurrence fore-shewed to the spectators what the event should be; that is, how these indignities should terminate in his resurrection. At the time when he was seized, to be led away to the high priest, this singular circumstance is related by St. Mark, that he was followed by a *certain young man, with a linen cloth cast about his naked body*, (who he was, or whence he came, it is not said) and that, when the enemies of Jesus laid hold of him, he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.—Thus it fell out in the case of Jesus himself: he was laid hold of, and every measure was taken to prevent his escape, even

* Heb. xiii. 13.

from death itself: but when the linen cloth was cast about his naked body, he left it behind him in the sepulchre, and fled naked from those who had seized him.

Much learning may be derived from other circumstances, which I can but briefly mention. The coat of Christ was without a seam; it was, therefore, not rent into parts; to shew, that the Christian church should be of one piece throughout: with the same mind, the same doctrines, and the same worship. A division of the garment denotes a separation of the people; as Samuel interpreted when Saul rent the mantle of the prophet; *the Lord*, said he, *hath rent the kingdom from thee this day.* All who pretend to have put on Christ should wear this seamless garment; they should be possessed by a spirit of uniformity, and be studious to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and of Christian charity.

The preference given to Barabbas, a thief and a murderer, should warn us of what often hath happened, and often will happen; that treason, sedition, and murder shall, on certain occasions, when it pleases God to introduce confusion and misery, find better acceptance with the people, and with those who mislead them, than the excellent doctrine and exemplary patience of Jesus Christ, which do not accord with the mistaken views of worldly and ambitious men; who are more nearly allied to Belial, the dæmon of discord, than to the God of peace and order.

From the apparently helpless condition of Christ at his death, it was argued, that God had forsaken him, and that he might be taken and persecuted with impunity: so do the wicked promise themselves, that the cause of his church and his religion is impotent in itself, because God gives the power for a time to those

who mock at, and trample upon it. But the triumph of the wicked is short. The time soon came, when *the king sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers*, the Jews, *and burnt up their city*, Jerusalem. So shall they all perish, and their habitation shall be laid waste, and the earth they live upon shall be burnt up, who now indulge themselves in the contempt of Christianity.

The departure of Christ from this world was in such a form as gave us a sign of his future appearance in judgment, and how it shall be. A cloud took him from us into heaven; and a cloud shall bring him to us again: he shall *so* come as he was seen to go: whence we have that warning in the Revelation, *behold he cometh with clouds!* In that awful day, they will be best pleased to meet him, who now in this life, while, through those clouds, we behold him with the eye of Faith, adore his character, and love his church, and study his wisdom, and delight in his truth, and keep his commandments.

FOUR LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

HEBREWS;

SHEWING THE HARMONY BETWEEN THE

MYSTERIES, DOCTRINES, AND MORALITY

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

LECTURE I.

ON THE CHARACTER AND OFFICES OF THE SON OF GOD, AS THEY ARE SET FORTH IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

We read, in the 24th chapter of St. *Luke's* gospel, that as two of the disciples were walking to *Emmaus*, on the day of Christ's resurrection, an unknown person joined them on the way, and entered into discourse with them. After some questions had passed between them, this unknown person (who was no other than Jesus himself) began to shew them, how all the circumstances, so lately fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, had been foreshewn in the scripture: and, *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* Who can read this without wishing to have overheard that *expository* discourse, which, as the disciples said of it afterwards, made their *hearts burn within them?* Such a discourse is the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, to those whose hearts are open to understand it; not conceived in the same words, perhaps, nor laid down exactly in the same method; but consisting of the same matter, and all tending to produce the same effect.

All the doctrine contained in this epistle relates to one or other of these three heads;

First, to the *Person* of the *Son of God*, as it had been described in the Old Testament.

Secondly, to the *Religion* of the *Gospel*, as being the same under both Testaments.

Thirdly, to the *Church* of Israel, as a figure of the Church of Christ.

Under the first of these heads, I shall extract and arrange the doctrine of the Old Testament relating to the person of the Son of God; taking the Epistle to the Hebrews as my authority; wherein the apostle begins with shewing the divine character of the Son of God, as distinct from, and superior to, the nature of *Angels;* those invisible and exalted beings, who are between the nature of men and the nature of God.

For, first, his name is greater than theirs; it being said to him, never to them, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee**. And, secondly, he is an object of worship to angels—when he bringeth in his first begotten into the world, he saith †, *and let all the angels of God worship him.* And farther, he is celebrated in the Psalms as the King of heaven, and the Creator of the world—*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth:* &c. these things are said, as the apostle witnesses, *to the Son;* who being also commanded to *sit at the right hand of God,* which was never said to any angel, his person was not of a created angelic nature, as the Hebrews might suppose, who had been used to that term in Moses and the prophets (and perhaps took it generally in such a sense) but strictly divine, and himself the Lord and God of men and angels, the coassessor of the Father in glory everlasting.

Such indeed is the character of the Son in the He-

* Chap. i. 5. † Chap. vi.

brew scriptures, that it is the same in all respects with those titles which the apostle subjoins to his name in the second verse of this first chapter: *whom* (saith he) God *hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Great as these expressions are, they are the same in substance with what the Old Testament had declared before concerning the Son of God; who being called the *Glory of God,* has that relation to him which the light that comes down from heaven has to the sun, from whence it proceeds; who being truly the Son, is consequently the heir of God; who now sustains that world of which he at first laid the foundations; who purged the sins of man *by himself,* who was the creator of man; and when he sat down at the right hand of God, returned to that majesty which was essential to his character before the world was made.

Nothing can be more full and express than the language the apostle uses in this chapter, to convince the Hebrews, that the term *Son of God,* as applied to the person of Christ, is not a name of accommodation, as sometimes taken in other applications of it, but a name, the excellence of which comes to him, not by adoption, but *by inheritance,* that is, by a natural right, which could not be, unless the Son were of the same nature with the Father.

As the apostle proceeds to treat of the person of Christ, he takes occasion to shew from the 8th Psalm, (and thereby teaches us how to understand that Psalm) that he, who, as God, was above all the angels of heaven, as man was made *lower than the angels,*

that he might taste of death for every man, and so *bring many sons unto glory*, by receiving glory in our nature, as the reward of his sufferings. In virtue of his incarnation, we are become the sons of God and brethren of Christ; as he was in all things made like unto his brethren, his brethren will in all things be made like unto him; that is, they will be imputed by a new relation to the same Father, with a legal right to the same inheritance, and be crowned with glory and honour after their sufferings upon earth.

The divine and human natures of the Son of God being thus settled and distinguished, we are now to consider him with the apostle under the three characters he took upon him for the salvation of the world.

1. As Moses, he was to be a *teacher, lawgiver*, and *prophet;* and Moses had acted as a minister of God *for a testimony of these things which were to be spoken after* * by a greater than Moses.

2. Like *Aaron* and *Melchizedec* he was to be a high priest and intercessor; a minister of the true sanctuary.

3. As *Joshua*, whose name is called *Jesus* in this epistle, he was to be the *captain of our salvation*, to conquer our spiritual enemies, and put us into possession of the heavenly Canaan.

From all these figurative characters of the old law, it was foreshewn, that he should be the greatest of prophets, the greatest of priests, and the greatest of conquerors. And first he is to be understood as a prophet or teacher.

The apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house †: to which the

* Chap. iii. 5. † Chap. iii. 1.

apostle adds, that he was thus faithful *for a testimony*; his ministry was prophetical, and bore witness in all the principal circumstances of it to the greater ministry of Christ, who was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, because he was the master and builder of that house, in which Moses was no more than a servant. The fidelity of Moses, under all the various trials of his ministry, is the circumstance here selected by the apostle, and chiefly insisted on; but there was scarcely a circumstance attending his whole character which did not afford some *testimony* to the ministry of Christ. The general character of both is the same, in that they were *prophets*; and as the one is said to be *mighty in word and deed**, so is the other.

The *deeds* of Moses were great beyond those of any other prophet, Christ excepted. We see him working wonders amongst a proud and obstinate people, whose hearts were hardened against him; as Christ wrought his miracles amongst the blinded Jews, who never believed on him at last: and as Egypt was at length fearfully judged by the hand of Moses, so were the Jews cast out and destroyed in a terrible manner, when the time of vengeance came upon them, which Christ had threatened. As Moses left Pharaoh in wrath, never to see his face any more, so Christ left the Jews at their own desire, never more to meet with them but in judgment, when Jerusalem should be overthrown.

In their *words* they were so far alike, that both were lawgivers, delivering to the people the precepts which were received from heaven. All the faithful of the Israelitish church were disciples of Moses, and did as he had commanded them; as the faithful of

* Comp. Acts vii. 22. with Luke xxiv. 19.

the latter days are followers of Christ, and observers of his laws.

But most remarkable was the *fidelity* of both these teachers, in persisting on the part of God, in opposition to the powers of this world, and the malice of their own people. *When Moses was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season* *. As the one rejected the pleasures of Pharaoh's court, so the other withstood the solicitations of the ambitious Jews, refusing to be made a king, and rejecting all the kingdoms of the world when they were offered to him. Each of them exposed themselves to reproach and hatred, for maintaining the authority of God, and acting in his name. This is pointed out to us in many remarkable observations of the first martyr, *St. Stephen*, in his apology against the Jews. *This*, says he, *is that Moses, whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them.* When he first offered himself to his own people as a deliverer, they received him not, but affronted him with that insolent question, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge?* When he pleaded the cause of God, all the congregation murmured at him, as the Jews hated Christ for his exhortations to obedience: corrupt Scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests, rose up against him, as Moses was opposed and railed at by a self-sanctified party, headed by *Corah, Dathan,* and *Abiram*. The opposition therefore that was raised against Jesus Christ, and all the affronts put upon him, though they might make him seem little in the eyes of the Jews, brought his character to a conformity with that of their first law-

* Chap. xi. 24.

giver, and to their eternal confusion demonstrated the truth of his mission, and thus argues the first martyr, pressing the Jews with the inference—*This Moses, whom they refused, saying who made thee a ruler and a judge, the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer.* Persecuted as he was and despised, God sent him and supported him; and they who have persecuted Christ, have only fulfilled what the Scriptures foreshewed by the things which had happened to Moses, the first faithful minister of God to the children of Abraham. The church which was brought out of Egypt, was under his œconomy in the wilderness, to be directed in the way, and to be fed and supported as occasion required. The people of God are still travelling through a wilderness, with the second Moses to lead and support them under all the wants, temptations, and dangers of their earthly pilgrimage. By this faithful guide will the house of God be governed and protected, till the office of Moses shall be superseded by that of Joshua, and he shall put them in possession of the good land which they have now in prospect.

The second capacity in which this epistle sets before us the Son of God, is that of our *great high priest,* signified to us under the figures of the law by the two characters of *Melchizedec* and *Aaron.*

It pleased God from the beginning of the world, as soon as the fall had given occasion to such a dispensation, to *take from among men* some person properly appointed, to make intercession for the rest; and thereby to keep up the expectation of a divine intercessor, who should make an atonement once for all by a sufficient and eternal sacrifice. The first eminent example the Scripture gives us of such a person, is in the character of Melchizedec, who as *priest of*

*the most high God met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the Kings, and blessed him**. His priesthood was prior to that of the Mosaic law, and greater, because, as the apostle argued, Abraham shewed its superiority, by offering to this priest the *tenth* of the spoils, and taking his *blessing*. From Abraham the Levitical priesthood descended; and the children being inferior to the father, and the father inferior to this high priest, it follows that the priesthood of the law was inferior to the priesthood of Melchizedec. From him Abraham received *bread* and *wine*; and the *oath* of God being the great sanction of the priesthood which administers this sacrament, it is thence evident, that the priesthood of the gospel, which Christ began, and continued and perpetuated, with its offering of bread and wine, is the only true priesthood; earlier than the priesthood of the law in time, and superior to it in dignity. Thus *after the similitude of Melchizedec, there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.* For it appears by the apostle's reasoning, that this Melchizedec was no human person; inasmuch as he had no human descent, and it is essential to this order, that its priesthood should be *unchangeable*† and eternal.—Whence it must follow, that no mere man could ever be capable of the conditions of such a priesthood. There never could be more than one priest of the order; and that priest is Christ himself; who, before *the days of his flesh*, exhibited to the Father of the faithful that effectual priesthood, which should save the world; and made him a partaker of

* Chap. vii. 1.

† The *Greek* means such a priesthood as *doth not pass from one person to another*; so that there can be but one person of that order.

its benefits. All this doctrine the apostle has drawn out of the short account in the book of Genesis concerning the person of Melchizedec, and the oath spoken of in the 110th Psalm relating to his priesthood.

In the person of Aaron, and the priesthood of the law, we have another standing memorial of the priesthood of Christ, which taught the people under a figure, that the true priest should do, once for all, what Aaron and his successors did year by year. The law had a *shadow* of the *good things* that were *to come* by the gospel; and all its ceremonies and services were accommodated to shew the necessity and the effects of a better priesthood with better sacrifices. For first, the tabernacle itself was a pattern of an heavenly original: the directions given to Moses for the constructing of it imply that it was no more than a copy; and thus argues the apostle. *The priests,* says he, *that offer gifts and sacrifices serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things; as Moses was admonished of God* (or, according to the Greek, as Moses was *divinely informed* of God) *when he was about to make the tabernacle; For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* The heavenly substance of which this tabernacle was the shadow and pattern, is now exhibited to us under the gospel; and we may trace the lines of the *true tabernacle* if we attend to the form of that which represented it. The first part of the tabernacle, in which the daily ministrations were performed, was a figure of this world, in which temporary and mortal priests perform the services of God. Beyond the vail there was another tabernacle, called the *holiest of all,* or as the Hebrew speaks, the *Holy of Holies.* This sacred

place was open only to the high priest, who entered into it with the blood of the yearly sacrifice. When Christ by his death, which rent the vail of the temple, had opened a way into the heavenly sanctuary, then was the truth of this yearly service accomplished, and he passed from officiating as a priest upon earth, to appear with the merits of his blood for us in heaven, before the presence of God. And thus the apostle explains it.—*Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.* In which words it is plainly implied, that he did truly once for all, what Aaron the high priest did every year; therefore what Aaron did, foreshewed what he should do; and if so, the person of Aaron was a figure of his person. That it was no more than a figure for the time then present, and that Aaron was not the true intercessor, which the people of God were taught to expect, was evident from the repetition of his sacrifices year by year; which shewed, that of themselves they were ineffectual: every succeeding yearly offering and atonement shewed the inefficacy of what had gone before. Supposing they had answered the end of propitiation, the apostle puts the question, *would they not then have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins* *, that is, they might have pleaded in the sight of God the effect of what had passed, if it had been effectual; but it was repeated continually; therefore it was not effectual; it was only *descriptive* or exhibitory of that sacrifice, which in the fulness of time should be effectual to the putting away of sin.

* Chap. x. 2.

And this reminds us of the difference between the high priest of the tabernacle, and the high priest of the true sanctuary; that the latter was both priest and sacrifice. And it was necessary he should be so; for the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins: the cattle upon a thousand hills could not make an atonement for one sinner. There is indeed no visible relation, in the eye of human reason, between the death of a sheep and the pardon of sin; but that Christ, a perfect man, the accepted and beloved Son of God, should shed his blood to save our souls; in that there is so much sense, that it is the very *wisdom* and *the power of God.*

It has been made a question, by those who question every thing, whether sacrifices were of divine institution. But sacrifices are *descriptive;* and as the thing described is the redemption of man by the shedding of the blood of Christ, which never could be known but by revelation; the supposition, that sacrifice could be of human invention, is an absurdity. It is as if we were to imagine, that words could be invented by those who had no knowledge of things; or that *signs* could be brought into use without any prior idea of the *things signified.* The knowledge of a Redeemer was first given to man; and the observation of sacrifice was the expression of that knowledge by a significant act. All mankind were derived from these to whom this knowledge was first given; and therefore all nations of the world, in all times of the world, did in some form or other retain the observation of sacrifice, for the putting away of sin.

The third character under which the Son of God was foreshewn to us under the law, is that of a conqueror. As *Joshua,* whose name is also called *Jesus*

in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ was to become the *captain of our salvation;* to subdue our spiritual enemies, and put us into possession of the heavenly Canaan. The person of Joshua, and his acts and the effects of his commission, are all descriptive of the things to be accomplished by the *true Jesus.*—He was the successor of Moses, as the Gospel cometh after the law; and carried into effect what the law could not accomplish, but only exhibited in prospect; as Moses died on Mount Nebo, with only a distant view of the Holy Land. After the death of Moses, a new generation of people, under the command of Joshua, were conducted to many signal victories, which opened a way to the promised inheritance, that* *rest* which was to put a period to their wanderings in the wilderness. As the Saviour of the Hebrews, he was honoured with that very name which was afterwards given to him who came *after Moses,* to be the *Saviour of the world.* Joshua knew the excellence of that country to which he was leading the people, and encouraged them to press forward to the enjoyment of it, through all the dangers of which they were afraid. *The land,* says he, *is an exceeding good land: if the Lord delight in us then he will bring us into this land and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey—fear ye not the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us.* And so it came to pass; the mighty inhabitants of the land fled before them, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat, after the priests had encompassed it with the ark, and blown with the rams' horns, as they had been commanded. All this was fulfilled at the wonderful

* Chap. iv. 8.

propagation of the gospel under the conduct of Jesus Christ. The powers of the world were all against it, but the sound of the gospel from the mouths of the apostles prevailed against them all. Weak and contemptible as the means might appear which God had appointed, the end was answered. Idolatry was overpowered: Satan was cast out of his strong holds, which he had so long possessed in peace; and the *kingdom of the world became the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.*

Here it is a wonderful thing to consider, that the Canaanitish nations, who possessed the land promised to the people of God, were all Idolaters, or *Gentiles* as they are called, such as the Roman empire and all the kingdoms of the world were before the establishment of Christianity. This circumstance is taken notice of and applied in the apology of St. Stephen against the Jews. *Our fathers*, said he, *had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness—which* also our fathers that *came after* brought in with *Jesus* into the possession of the *Gentiles.* The tabernacle of God was transferred to the Gentiles, and there established under Joshua; to signify in a figure, that the church, under Jesus Christ, should be transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles. The first set of people who came out of Egypt, rebelled against Moses, and refused to hear the exhortation of Joshua: so they died in their unbelief, and their carcases were left in the wilderness. But those who *came after*, (as *St. Stephen* words it) the successors of that disobedient generation, entered with the tabernacle into the possession of the Gentiles; as the new children of Abraham, who came after the apostate Jews, followed the true Jesus, when his religion was translated into the heathen world.

The time is yet to be expected, when every power of this world and the other shall fall before him. As those wicked Canaanites were driven out of their land, when the measure of their iniquities was filled up; so shall the wicked be driven out of the earth, when that vengeance of God shall overtake them, which they have so long held in contempt and defiance. The world itself shall be surrounded by the Son of God, as the Captain of our Salvation, and the army of saints and angels which shall attend upon him at his coming. The *last trumpet* shall sound, and the world shall be overthrown, as Jericho fell flat, when it had been compassed about seven days by the priests and ministers of God. When the priests blew, as they were commanded, at the time appointed, and all the people *shouted with a great shout*, (Josh. vi. 5.) the fortifications of that proud city sunk at once into a heap of ruins. With reference to which history, we are reminded that *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout* (1 Thess. iv. 16.) *with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.*

It pleased the wisdom of God to describe beforehand, in the manner I have now explained to you from the Old Testament, the things relating to the person of the Son of God, as our *Lawgiver*, our *High Priest*, and our *Saviour*; with the works he was to perform for the redemption of mankind. Wonder not that they were all so particularly delineated by ceremonies, signs, and miracles. They are so great and important, that had they been written in the firmament of heaven as plainly as they are written in the books of Moses and the Prophets, they would have been worthy of it.

LECTURE II.

THE RELIGION AND FAITH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THE SAME (IN SUBSTANCE) UNDER BOTH TESTAMENTS.

THE nature of man being the same now as from the beginning of the world, and the nature of God being unchangeable; it must follow, that the great object of the dispensations of God to man must be the same in every age; though the form and manner after which that object is pursued may be different: so that what *God spake in former times to the fathers by the prophets* will be found the same in sense and effect with what he *spoke in the last days by his Son;* though he spoke *in divers manners,* as occasion might require *at sundry times.* This is a matter of the utmost consequence; and it is what I propose to shew you in the present lecture; namely, that it was the design of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews,* to teach them that the religion of the people of God is, for substance and intention, the same under both Testaments.

This I shall prove from two general reasons, and afterwards from some particular ones.

My first general reason is this; that religion has the same name under the two dispensations of Moses and of Jesus Christ: it is called *the Gospel:* for the apostle, speaking of those who were under the teaching of God in the wilderness, says, *unto us was*

the Gospel preached as well as unto them ;* making the religion, delivered to us in the New Testament, but a repetition of what had always been delivered to the Church. The *Gospel* signifies a message from God for the salvation of man ; and as such was delivered at sundry times by Moses and the prophets. If the word preached did not profit some, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,* this is no argument against the sense or sufficiency of the word itself ; it only shews us, that, in all ages of the world, some there have been and will be, who being carnally minded, and wholly attached to this world, are destitute of that principle, which the scripture calls by the name of *faith ;* and which, as a universal test to the servants of God, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

What I here say leads me to my second general reason, to prove that religion is the same under both Testaments ; and this is, that it has the same general characteristic, or mark, by which it is to be distinguished. If we ask, what was the religion of the Jews, who received the law from Moses ? The answer is plain ; it was a religion which believed things past, and had faith in things to come, expecting the present favour of God from the observation of certain acts of religious worship, as *seeing him that is invisible.* This principle of faith has been the characteristic of the true religion from the beginning of the world. To Adam the generation of the world was an article of faith ; and the effects of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge were no objects of his sight. After the Fall, the expectation of a Saviour, the *seed of the woman,* who should *bruise the*

* Chap. iv. 2.

head of the serpent, was another article of faith; as was also the curse to be executed upon the earth, which the world in the days of Noah had neglected and forgotten. There never was a time when true religion did not believe something past, and expected something to come, and conform itself to ordinances, the effects of which were of a spiritual nature; and it is the trial of man in this life, whether he will observe such ordinances, and depend upon them. Adam's dependence was upon the sacramental Tree of Eden. The Patriarchs and Jews depended on the rites of sacrifices and purifications, imposed on them till the times of reformation; and we are taught, by the example of Abel, that a sacrifice was accepted for the *faith* of him that offered it. Christians now depend on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. With regard to the past, they believe that Christ suffered for their sins, and arose from the dead: and, with regard to the future, that he shall come again to judge the world. The religion of the people of God always was, and always will be, a scheme of *faith* and *dependence:* therefore it is an universal doctrine, common to all ages, which a prophet delivered and an apostle hath confirmed, that *the just shall live by faith* *. Let him be as *just* as he will, his *life* is not from his *justice,* but from his *faith:* without which, he has nothing of that life which true religion gives; and is dead in the sight of God. To the same effect, our apostle speaking of Enoch, that according to the testimony of the scripture, he *pleased God* †; draws an inference in favour of Enoch's faith, because *without faith it is impossible to please him* ‡. This general principle of faith, while it reconciles and

* Chap. x. 38. † Gen. v. 22, and Ecclus. xliv. 16.

‡ Chap. xi. 6.

unites the religion of both Testaments, serves to detect every false religion that has been or can be invented; because in such there can be no *faith* properly so called; inasmuch as it will either have false objects or none at all.

In the religion of the Gentiles, there was a sort of faith, but it was chiefly directed to objects fabulous and false. The *Mythology*, (by which I mean the *religious mysteries*) of the Greeks, gave them a traditionary account of the world's original; of its destruction by the flood; of a future paradise (called *Elysium*) for the virtuous; and a place of torment (called *Tartarus*) for the punishment of departed souls, after a formal trial and condemnation by the judges of the infernal regions; and they preserved the institution of sacrifice; thereby confessing their dependence on invisible powers for the expiation of sin. They also maintained the doctrine of man's natural blindness and impotence without the assistance and inspiration of their deities, for which they never failed to invoke them in their compositions and great undertakings. Modern times have been refining upon the Reformation, till by degrees they have conceived and brought forth a sort of philosophical religion, distinct from every thing the world has seen before; because it is *a religion without faith*. The scheme of our *Deists*, as they call themselves, has nothing in it of things past; no fact or tradition to ground itself upon; it has no sacraments, nor services of any kind, to keep up an intercourse with heaven: it expects no predicted judgment, and has no particular view of any thing after this life. Thus having no objects of faith, it teaches no dependence, which alone renders the most just man acceptable to God. It actually inculcates *independ-*

ence, and glories in it: it has neither church nor sacraments, nor religious worship, nor allegiance, nor submission to God or man; and therefore, it comes more nearly up to the wishes of the Devil, the great author and first father of independence, than any religion ever professed in the world before. If dependence upon God be the characteristic of a religious man, then it must be better to believe the labours of *Hercules*, the future judgment of *Rhadamanthus*, and to do sacrifice to *Jupiter*, than to be of this persuasion; because the worst religion, professed in natural ignorance and sincerity, must be preferable to that proud and incorrigible ignorance, which wilfully rejects all the religion in the world.

From the two general reasons I have now given you, it appears, that the law and the gospel are the same religion under different forms: for they have the same *name*, and are distinguished by the same *character*; that is, by the great principle of *faith*, which is essential to both. To these two general reasons, I shall now subject as many particular ones as are necessary, from the Epistle under our consideration; in all of which it is required of me to shew, that as the *principle* of faith is common to both Testaments, so the *articles* of faith were in general the same.

1. We have seen already, that the Son of God had been revealed to the Hebrews as the Creator of the world, and sitting at the right hand of God, in certain passages, of which the worst of the Jews did not dispute the application; and with all this, that he should yet be *partaker of flesh and blood**, and in all things *made like unto his brethren*; as Moses had before declared in the law; *the Lord thy God will raise up unto*

* Chap. ii. 14.

*thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me**. So particular is this prophecy, that it is twice given in the book of *Deuteronomy*, and twice reasoned from in the *Acts of the Apostles*, first by St. *Peter*, and afterwards by St. *Stephen*, in their discourses to the Jews †.

2. The necessity of mediation with God on the behalf of man, was signified by the priesthood of the law; to teach the people, that prayer could not be heard, nor sin pardoned without a *priest* to *intercede*, and *blood* to *expiate*. But then, that this was only a figurative priesthood, a figurative intercession, a figurative atonement, serving for a time, to describe what should come after, and supersede the descriptive services of the law; the apostle here proves from the Old Testament itself, where a prophet pronounces them insufficient: *in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure—Then, said he, lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second* ‡: that is, he taketh away the services of the law, that he may bring in Christ to do the will of God. *In the volume of the book*, it *had been written* of him; for the book of the law spoke this language in every part of it, that Christ should come to do the will of God for our sanctification.

3. The law shewed moreover, how this should be effected: for it was *dedicated with blood*, and its precepts and promises were called *a Testament*, that is, *a Will*, such as is made and witnessed amongst men for the conveying and settling an inheritance in a lawful way. Hence it followed, that no service could be accepted without the offering of blood; and that the *death* of the *testator* should intervene, before the

* Deut. xviii. 15. 18. † Acts iii. 22. and vii. 37.

‡ Chap. x. 6. 9.

promises of God could descend to his children. So argues the apostle *: *for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament; that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament* (and could not be purged away by the blood of animals) *they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead—whereupon, neither the first Testament was dedicated without blood.*

4. It was also foretold, that there should be *a new covenant* †; not such as was made with the fathers when they were brought out of Egypt, which covenant was confined to a particular people; but such as should comprehend all nations, when the spirit of the divine law should be written in the hearts of men, and all should know the Lord from the least to the greatest. But the old and the new were both contained in the covenant God made with Abraham in the times before the law. In regard to his natural posterity it was said, *unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates*: this is a temporal promise: but to the same Abraham it was said, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*: this is a spiritual promise, and is the same in all respects with the Christian covenant.

5. With regard to temporal things, the servants of God in all ages were instructed to look upon the world, and they actually did look upon it, as we do (or should do) now. Upon a principle of faith in God's promise, they who were called out of Egypt under Moses, set out upon a progress toward a land

* Chap. ix. 15. † Chap. viii. 8, &c.

which they had never seen, and knew only by report; with many difficulties and terrors to encounter by the way; so that the history of their journey is an instructive picture of all the trials and dangers of the Christian life: and when they were settled in the land of promise, their business was not to give themselves up to the enjoyment of the world, but to *serve God* in holiness and righteousness, and still to depend upon him for their support and defence against their enemies. The greatest favourites of heaven, who had the best title to inherit the earth, considered this life only as a *pilgrimage* toward a better. Abraham *sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country*, where he was not at home, and *dwelt in tabernacles*, to signify that he had no fixed habitation upon earth, but *looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Jacob underwent a series of disappointments and sorrows; and toward the close of his life confessed that his *days* had been *few and evil**. Moses preferred the *reproach of Christ* to the *treasures of Egypt:* and the saints and prophets, who came after him, were ready on all occasions to renounce the world in the spirit of martyrdom; they suffered all the contempt and persecution the world could inflict upon them for the trial of their faith, and *ran with patience the race that was set before them,* chusing death itself through the hope of a *better resurrection:* whence the saints of the law are celebrated and set forth as examples of faith and patience to the saints of the gospel. How unaccountable therefore has been the error of some modern divines, such as these days of refinement have produced, who have contended that the law gave no notice of a future life, and that the Jews were

* See chap. xi.

taught to look for nothing under it but temporal rewards: a doctrine so false in itself, so injurious to the word of God, and so contrary to the preaching of Christ and his apostles, that it is condemned in the articles of the church of England; the seventh of which affirms, as it ought to do, and as we have sufficiently proved already, that "The Old Testament "is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and "New Testament, everlasting life is offered to man-"kind by Christ, who is the only mediator between "God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore "they are not to be heard, which feign, that the old "fathers did look only for transitory promises." To shew that they had a better hope, and that their faith was the same as ours, though their worship was of a different form, is the whole design of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Christian doctrines are all deduced from the Old Testament. Our Saviour, in his argument against the Sadducees, Matt. xxii. 31, shews how the doctrine of a resurrection was taught in that declaration of God to Moses, "*I am the God* "*of Abraham*, &c." and the argument extends to the whole Old Testament: for if God, as the God of Abraham, was the *God of the living*, and Abraham still lives expecting the resurrection of the just; then the like declaration, wherever it occurs, must yield the same doctrine; for that God should be *the God of the dead*, is no more consistent with his honour in one part of the scripture than in another. The covenant of God is a covenant of *life*; and the argument is of equal force whether the relation is applied to those who are in the world or to those who are out of it. This life, considered in itself, is no better than death; (*vestra hæc, quæ dicitur vita, mors est;*) so that if God, when he called himself the *God of the Hebrews*, was

the God of those who had hope only in this life (as a modern divine asserted for a project) then he was the God of the dead; and so the name *God of the Hebrews* would have been a dishonourable title, of which, as the apostle observes, Heb. xi. 16, God would have been *ashamed*, as a title no better than that of a mortal king, whose power and promises extend to this life only.

6. All this is further evident, in that the law promised a *Rest* or *Sabbath* which it never gave; and therefore, the promise looked forward to that other glorious Sabbath which is to be fulfilled in another life. The apostle, in explaining the scripture on this subject, shews us how the fulfilling of this promise was suspended. That the faithful had a Sabbath of Rest in prospect after the course of their labours, appears from that threatening sentence in the law, which denied it to those who did not believe. *For*, saith the apostle, *we which have believed do enter into Rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath if they shall enter into my Rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world* *. Now the question is, what the *Rest* here spoken of can mean? It cannot mean that Rest which immediately followed the six days of the creation, when *God did rest on the seventh day from all his works;* for that Rest of God had been past and gone from the foundation of the world, when the works of God were finished. We must therefore look for another: and in this inquiry, it may occur, that the Rest to be expected was in the land of Canaan; because those who were precluded from it fell in the wilderness; according to what is said—† *with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it*

* Chap. iv. 3.

† Chap. iii. 17, 18. See Numb. xiv. 30. and Deut. xii. 9.

not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his Rest, but to them that believed not? Hence I say, it might be imagined, that the settlement of the people in Canaan was the Rest with which God was to reward them. But neither can this be the case; because in the prophet David, many ages afterwards, he limiteth the promise of this rest to a certain day; saying, *to day, after so long a time; to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts**. *For if Jesus*, as the apostle argues, (that is if *Joshua* who is also called *Jesus*) *had given them Rest*, (in Canaan) *then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a Rest to the people of God:* that is, in other words, according to the drift of the argument, the Rest proposed to the people of God always meant what it means now; and that which *remains* to us at this day *after so long a time*, is the same that was promised to the faithful of old. Consider the application of the term, and you will see that the apostle's reasoning must be true: for it is called the *Rest of God*—if they shall enter into *MY REST*—and what was that? It was undoubtedly a Rest in Heaven, after the works of the creation were finished upon earth: *he that is entered into his* rest *he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his:* therefore it is a Rest, into which no man can enter, till his *works* upon the earth are *finished.* To those who understand the language of the law, and the apostle's reasoning upon it, this is a demonstration, that the law did not rest in temporal promises. They who lived in faith under the patriarchal dispensation, died in the same faith; death could make no change in their creed,

* Chap. iii. 7, 8.

because they expected of God what they could never receive, till their works upon earth were finished. Therefore it is truly said of them; *these all died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth* *. The land of Canaan was not the object of their hope: it was only a sign and a pledge of the goodness of God, an earnest of what they were to expect after this life; therefore they desired *a better country, that is an heavenly,* and their mortal life was a *pilgrimage* in quest of it. There never was an age, in which it was not required of the children of God, that they should renounce the world, and prepare themselves by that discipline which should fit them for a better state. Such is the language of the Scripture to them all, under the several names of Patriarchs, Jews, or Christians— *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* †.

7. What I proposed to consider in this lecture hath been sufficiently proved; namely, that the religion of the people of God was the same for substance under the Old as under the New Testament; so that, in fact, we find but one true religion from the beginning of the world to the end of it; a religion of *faith* and *dependence upon God,* for his *protection* here, and his *rewards* hereafter.

The apostle having taught us throughout the Epistle that the spiritual things of the gospel, called the *good things to come,* were described as a body is by its shadow, under the priesthood and services of the

* Chap. xi. 13, &c. † Chap. xii. 5.

law; and that outward forms of worship were ordained to keep up an inward principle of faith in the promises of God; sums up his whole doctrine, by shewing us how faith operated, and what effects it produced in good men from the beginning of the world; in order to demonstrate, by their examples, that true religion always was what it now is; that *Jesus Christ* is *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever**; that the faith and patience of the gospel were nothing new; that the whole revelation of the Old and New Testament is one consistent scheme for the salvation of man; and consequently, that Christianity is indeed, as some in mockery have advanced, as *old as the creation.* This is the design of the 11th chapter, which begins with a definition of faith, as *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* It is the substance of things hoped for because nothing can be the object of our hope till it has first been the object of our faith. It is the evidence of things not seen, because they are capable of no other; the ear is the witness of sounds, and the eye is the witness of visible objects; but faith alone is the faculty which discerns invisible things, and receives them on the word of God: and if men do not with this faculty admit and embrace them, we shall not succeed by reasoning with them. Spiritual things must be received by a spiritual sense, which sense is called *faith*, and the scripture tells us, that *all men have not faith:* and where it is not, all the reasoning upon earth will not produce it; therefore let no man be so vain as to think, that his arguments will persuade those whom God hath not persuaded.

After his description of faith, the apostle proceeds

* Chap. xiii. 8.

to shew how it operated in the saints: first, in *Abel*, who offered a *bloody sacrifice* for the remission of sins; while Cain brought only of the *fruits of the earth*, not signifying his faith in the remission of sin by the shedding of innocent blood. Enoch is said to have *walked with God;* which no man can do but by faith, because God is invisible: therefore he *walked by faith and not by sight.* Noah believed that the flood would come upon the earth, when as yet there were no signs of it; and that his house might be saved, when the world should be drowned, by the preparing of an ark. Abraham gave himself up to God's direction, and went out in search of a land he had never seen, and did not so much as know the name of it. He laid Isaac upon the altar to be slain, though he had no other son to inherit the promises; whence his faith concluded, they would be secured by his son's resurrection. Joseph, when he was dying, commanded that his bones should be carried into Canaan; in faith that the whole nation would follow them; and that the promises would be fulfilled to him after his death. Moses gave up his project of preferment at court; knowing that the ministry of God and the *reproach of Christ* would be attended with a better *recompence.* The fear of God, whom he did not see, had more weight with him than the wrath of Pharaoh who was present to him.

By these and many other like examples, it is proved, that nothing great or acceptable to God was ever done, but only from a sight of things invisible, and the expectation of what is to come after death. It was this faith which subdued and cast out the kingdoms of Canaan, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the

violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

There are no motives to the observation of a Christian life more striking than those which are drawn from the facts of the law. These the Apostle hath set before us abundantly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as I may shew you hereafter. In the mean while the moral of the whole doctrine hitherto delivered, is *to look*, as they did who went before us, *unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;* that seeing him to be the beginning of our strength, and the end of our hope, we may follow him through the dangers of life and the terrors of death to *that rest which remaineth for the people of God.*

LECTURE III.

ON THE CHURCH, AS A SPIRITUAL SOCIETY, WHICH IS THE SAME THING AT ALL TIMES.

Our enquiry into the faith of the ancient fathers shewed us, that there never was more than one true religion in the world: we shall now discover, that there never has been more than one true *religious society*, called *the Church:* and this I shall endeavour to prove,

First, by considering the *nature* of the Church, as a society.

Secondly, by considering the *form* of it.

The Church, in its *nature*, always was what it now is, a society comprehending the *souls* as well as the *bodies* of men; and therefore, consisting of two parts, the one spiritual, answering to the soul, the other outward, answering to the body. Hence some have written much upon a *visible* Church and an *invisible*, as if they were two things; but they are more properly one, as the soul and body make a single person.

In the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle gives such a description of that society, into which Christians are admitted, as will shew us the nature of it. "Ye are come, says he, unto Mount "Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the hea- "venly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of "angels, to the general assembly and Church of the "first born which are written in heaven, and to God

" the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made " perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new cove- " nant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh " better things than that of Abel*." The terms here used give us a true prospect of the Church: let us take them in their order. By *Mount Sion*, we are not to understand the *place*, but the *thing signified*, the *heavenly society* of God and his saints; the same which David in spirit calls the *Hill of the Lord* †, whereto the King of Glory was to ascend; and the *Holy Hill of Sion*, spoken of the 2d Psalm, on which the Son was to be placed, after the vain opposition he should meet with from the Kings and Rulers of the earth. This is that *Zion of the Holy one of Israel*, to which the forces of the Gentiles were to flow from all parts of the world, as the prophet Isaiah describes it ‡; which prophecy was not fulfilled in the literal Sion where the Jews lived.

This society is also called the *City of the living God*, distinguished from the cities of the world, as Jerusalem was from the cities of the heathens: who dedicated their cities not to the living God, but to the names of their dead idols; such as were *Beth Shemesh*, *Beth Peor*, and others of that sort. This being then the city of the living God, must be an immortal society; for the *living God* does not preside over *dead citizens*; he is *not the God of the dead but the God of the living*, and all the members of this society *live unto him*. This is the city, said to *have foundations, whose builder and maker is God:* to this the holy Patriarchs looked as the object of their hope, knowing, that they were even then *of* it, and should never be out of it, because the *citizens* of God *never die*. It is therefore

* Chap. xii. 22, &c. † Psalm xxiv. ‡ Chap. lx.

called the *heavenly Jerusalem*, because it is of an heavenly nature: and it is called *the Jerusalem which is above, which is free and is the mother of us all**: it is free in its nature, and cannot be brought into bondage by the persecuting powers of this world; and its members are free, because they are spiritual; and spirits cannot be bound. It is the *mother of us all;* even of all the families of the earth that are admitted into it; it gives the new birth to people of all countries; it knows no distinction of Jews or Christians, and its *citizens* may live at *Athens, Rome,* or *Antioch.*

Its spiritual nature is farther declared, in that it is said to comprehend an *innumerable company of angels:* the whole family of heaven is included in it. The Apostle calls it the *general assembly,* because it takes its members from all times and all places: other assemblies are partial, composed of the citizens of one city, or the people of one nation. It is the *Church of the first born written in heaven,* because its members, being intitled to the privilege of *inheritance,* are therefore called *first born,* to whom the right of inheritance belongs. This is also spoken with reference to that custom of the law, according to which all the first born were to be *sanctified unto the Lord;* and Moses was commanded to register them all, and take the *number of their names* †; with reference to which, the sons of the spiritual society are said to have their *names written in heaven,* where they are registered in the *book of life.* The word *Church* explains nothing to us in English, but in the Greek it signifies the company of those who are *called out* of the world to be the servants and citizens of God. Other societies have their proper judges and rulers; but here, God is

* Gal. iv. 26. † Numb. iii. 40.

the *judge of all;* his law is the rule of judgment, and he rewards and punishes without fear or favour. In the communion of the Church the *spirits of just men made perfect* are also included. It is a society, which admits only the spirits of the living, and as such cannot exclude the spirits of the dead: and this confirms what we said above, that the church is a spiritual community, comprehending the dead as well as the living: for the best interpretation supposes these to be the spirits of the Martyrs, who had finished their earthly course, and were *made perfect through sufferings* after the example of their Saviour.

The Christian Church is here described by the *old names,* to shew that it was *no new thing,* but the same holy mount of God, the same heavenly city of God, to which the spiritual part of his people always belonged: and they knew they did so, because the living God must be the head of a living society. They who were ignorant of its true nature, disputed about the *place* where the Church ought to be: the Samaritans contended that it was to be on their *mountain;* the Jews said it was to be only at *Jerusalem:* but, as a society of spirits, it is no where and every where; the *true worshippers* of God are they who worship him *in spirit and in truth* *; wherever these are, there is that *Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all.*

The Church being a society of a spiritual kind, is therefore called by the same names in all ages: Christians are said to be come unto *Mount Sion,* and Moses is said to have been with the *Church* in the wilderness. The reasonableness of which will be farther evident, if we consider the nature of its vocation: it

* John iv. 23.

is separated from the pollutions of the world, and called unto holiness of life. *Ye shall be holy unto me,* said the Lord; *for I the Lord am holy; and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine* *. For this end the Hebrews were placed in a land by themselves, that they might not be corrupted with the ways of the Gentiles. They had laws and customs of their own, all tending to secure them from the idolatrous worship and wicked manners of the heathens. We Christians, who now belong to the Church, are in like manner called out of the world. Our blessed Saviour, speaking of the vocation of his disciples, saith †, *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

But it is now to be shewn, secondly, that as the Church of God hath always been the same in its *nature,* it hath likewise preserved the same *form* in its external œconomy; the wisdom of God having so ordained, that the Christian Church under the gospel should not depart from the model of the Church under the law. For as the congregation of Israel was divided into *twelve tribes,* under the twelve Patriarchs, so is the Church of Christ founded on the *twelve Apostles,* who raised to themselves a spiritual seed amongst all the nations of the world. They all had an equal right to use the style of St. Paul; who speaks of his converts, as of his *children, begotten* by him to a new life, through the preaching of the gospel: so that he and all the other apostles are to be considered as the patriarchal progenitors of the whole Christian people.

In the new church we have twelve Apostles, in the old twelve Patriarchs; but in the heavenly society,

* Lev. xx. 26. † John xvii. 16.

where both are united, we find *four and twenty Elders* seated about the throne of God, as it was shewn in the spirit to St. John. There the saints of all ages looked to the Lamb that was slain for the salvation of all. By some he was expected; by others he is commemorated: to those he was the end of the law; to these the beginning of the gospel; but to the general assembly of them all, he is the object of their faith and hope, and the principle of all true religion from the beginning of the world to the end of it; the Redeemer of all times, the Saviour of all nations. We have reason to believe, that the Church, even in its glorious and triumphant state, shall still be conformed to its primitive division; for Christ assured his Apostles, that when the Son of man should sit upon the throne of his glory, they also should *sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel* *.

Our Saviour, in choosing the number of those whom he appointed to minister in his Church, was pleased to observe a strict conformity to the number of rulers under the law. Besides his *twelve* apostles, he appointed other *seventy* also: the number *seventy* agrees to that of the *Elders*, who were appointed to assist Moses in his ministry †.

A farther examination will teach us, that the priesthood of the gospel was formed very exactly upon that of the law. Aaron was appointed as an high priest for the service of the tabernacle; under whom the sons of Aaron constituted an inferior order of priests, divided afterwards under David and Solomon into four and twenty courses, all regularly officiating in their turns. Below these there was the order of the Levites, who assisted the priests in all the services

* Matt. xix. 28. † See Numb. xi. 16. 25.

of the temple. There were then three orders of priests in the Jewish Church; there was the high priest, and the sons of Aaron, and the Levites. In the Church of Christ there was the order of the *Apostles;* besides whom there were the *seventy disciples* sent out after them; and last of all the *Deacons* were ordained, to serve under both in the lower offices of the Church. The same form is still preserved in every regular Church of the world, which derives its succession and authority from the Church of the Apostles; after whom the *Bishops* succeeded by their appointment; such as *Timothy* and *Titus* were in their respective Churches. This authority has been opposed in the Christian as it was in the Jewish Church: Corah and his company rose up against Moses and Aaron, for usurping a lordly authority over the people: so in the later ages of the Christian Church, a levelling principle hath prevailed, which has appeared in many different shapes. In some it objects to the order of *Bishops* as an *usurpation* of long standing in the Church: in others, it argues for an equality of authority in all Christians, because *all the congregation are holy;* herein making no distinction between holiness of *person* and holiness of *office*. Thus hath the authority of the Church been troubled with arguments and objections, the same as in the times of old, and proceeding from the same spirit of rebellious opposition, under the disguise of superior sanctity. It was foretold to the church by the Apostle, that of *their own selves men should arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them* *, as Corah and his company rose out of the congregation itself, and drew the people after them.

* Acts xx. 30.

Unless it were so, the Church of Christ would not be conformed, as it ought to be, to the Church of Israel. Though the case is lamentable, yet thus it must be: *it must be that offences come;* the authority of the priesthood must be opposed and the Church must be divided, if the scriptures are verified; *but woe unto them by whom the offence cometh.*

The Church under the gospel hath also been provided for as it was under the law, by the *tenths* of all the fruits of the earth, set apart for the maintenance of its ministers. The antiquity of this provision is so great, that we cannot trace it up to its beginning. Abraham gave the *tenth of the spoils* to *Melchizedec,* long before the age of Moses; and therefore the law only established what had been instituted in the earliest times of the Patriarchs. The Christian Church followed the same rule in all countries, as soon as it obtained a regular establishment; and the apostle argues for the propriety of it from the law of Moses. *Do ye not know,* said he, *that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel**. Here it is evidently intended, that the practice of the law should be taken as a precedent for the times of the gospel; and that as it was then, *even so* it ought to be now: but the clergy then received the tenths, &c. which were consecrated by God's appointment; therefore it is his ordinance that they should receive the same now; otherwise the cases would not be parallel.

During the persecutions under which the Christian

* 1 Cor. ix. 13.

Church suffered at its first appearance, its support by pecuniary contribution, and the sale of private property may seem to have authorized a new rule, different from that of the law of Moses. But we can draw no conclusion, because of the necessity of that time. In regular times the old rule will take place: and if the church should again fall into distress, it must again depend upon the devotions of the congregation.

There is likewise a conformity in all the services and ministrations of the Church. The law had its washings and purifications, as we have the purification of water baptism. They had the passover in figure as we have it in truth; for *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;* and we *keep* that *feast* as a memorial of *our redemption,* as they commemorated their deliverance from Egypt by the offering of the Paschal Lamb. He was no Jew who did not celebrate the Passover; and he is no Christian who neglects the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As they had *manna in the wilderness* to support them, we have the *true bread from heaven;* without which we cannot pass through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan. They added their prayers to the *incense* of the temple, as we offer up our prayers through the merits of Christ, whereby they are recommended and made acceptable. There was a censer for incense within the veil, as Christ intercedes for us in the presence of God. *Let my prayer,* says the Psalmist, *be set forth in thy sight as the incense;* thereby shewing us what was intended in that part of their service: and when Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, offered incense in the temple, there came a voice from heaven which assured him that his *prayers were heard.* As these things have been considered

more at large in the 4th and 5th Lectures on the *figurative language of the scripture*, it may suffice to observe, that as Jesus Christ is called the *minister of the true tabernacle*, all the services of the old tabernacle are verified under his priesthood; so that not one jot or tittle of the law is found to fail.

The Church has also been remarkably conformable to itself in its sufferings. There never was a time, so far as we can learn, when the true Church of God, with its doctrines and institutions, was not hated and opposed by the world; either persecuted and oppressed by powerful tyrants, or traduced and insulted by lying historians. From Abel downwards, a restless worldly spirit of unbelief has contradicted the worship of the true God, and troubled his people. The Hebrews were held in abomination by the Egyptians, and treated as slaves; though the nation had been saved from famine, and its policy reformed and established under an Hebrew. They plotted to extirpate the whole race of them, by casting every man-child into the river. When the Church was settled in Canaan, all the neighbouring nations of idolaters were as thorns in their sides, detesting their religion, and fighting against them at every opportunity. The Chaldæans led them into captivity, and detained them for seventy years, with a view to make them forget their religion; the practice of which they also endeavoured to render impossible by the demolition of their temple. Antiochus murdered the Maccabees, and harassed the whole people on account of their faith.

The same spirit, acting on the same principles, afflicted the Christian Church with ten bloody persecutions; and there never was a time when it was not misrepresented by lying reports and malicious accusations. Truth and godliness have always been dis-

tinguished by the world's ill-will towards them; and if there be any particular Church now, which is hated and railed at more than the rest, by Papists on one side and the Sectaries on the other, I will venture to pronounce from this circumstance only, that wherever that Church can be found, it will prove to be, in its *doctrine* and *profession*, the purest Church of Christ upon earth.

The authority and discipline of the Church (which are the last things I shall speak of) have been the same in all ages by God's appointment; as being founded on two reasons which are of perpetual obligation. The Church having the charge of the divine oracles, and being the guardian of the divine law, must have authority to preserve it by punishing those who offend against it; and being a society or body corporate, must always have had (what is common to all lawful societies) a right of preserving itself by a power over its own members.

The authority of office in the Church always was, and now is, from God himself: no man can *take the honour* of the priesthood, but *he that is called of God, as was Aaron:* and the person so invested is accountable to God for the exercise of his authority, and not to the world; because the object in view is the preservation of God's law for the salvation of his people. Therefore, *every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward* *, and, *he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses* †. The same power *(mutatis mutandis)* was with the Christian Church; and they are commanded by the apostle to watch over their members and *look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace*

* Heb. ii. 2. † Chap. x. 28.

of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble them, and thereby many be defiled *. No society can long survive, when its discipline is lost; because the manners of men, when unrestrained, tend universally to dissolution. The Church has undoubtedly, as it always had, a divine right to preserve the faith, to punish its own members by censures, deprivations, and excommunications; and exercise such discipline as is necessary to prevent the gates of hell from prevailing against it.

When we consider the degeneracy of the times, and the corruption of all orders of people; the insolence of the offenders, and the weakness of authority; it should not make us fretful and disobedient; it should only dispose us to pray for that blessed day, when the Church of Christ shall be restored to its purity against the corruptions, and to its authority against the encroachments of the world; when he, who drove the buyers and sellers out of his temple, shall again purge his Church of those that disgrace and defile it; when they who have despised and oppressed it, as if it had been made for them to trample upon, shall themselves lick the dust with their teeth broken.

I have taken much pains to explain the matter of this epistle to the Hebrews, because it connects the Old and New Testament, and gives light to both. It rectifies many mistakes of superficial Christians, who suppose that Christianity was a new thing when it was preached by the apostles, because Christ was then newly come in the flesh; whereas it was only the perfection of that doctrine, and that Church, which had subsisted from the beginning of the world.

* Chap. xii. 15.

Hence also we learn the infinite importance of the sacraments and institutions of the Church, of which many Christians in these days have a poor low understanding. The confusion which followed upon the reformation brought many to a deplorable state of ignorance; out of which they cannot be recovered but by following that admonition of the prophet—*Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls* *.

* Jer. vi. 16.

LECTURE IV.

THE MORAL OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES, AS STATED IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THIS Epistle doth not only shew us the harmony of the Old and New Testament, and explain the great doctrine of faith with all the depth of divine learning; but gives us the best precepts, and the weightiest reasons, for a godly and Christian life; which all who study this part of the scripture should lay up in their hearts; that they may be *doers of the word and not hearers only*. These precepts and reasons I shall therefore collect and enforce to your consideration, as they occur to us in the course of the Epistle.

The Apostle having described the dignity of the Son of God, thus argues; that if he was so great, how important must that way of salvation be, which he preached to the world? How necessary must it be for us to attend it? and how dreadful will the consequences be if we do not? If the law of Moses, published by inferior ministers, was so strictly enforced, and every offence against the honour of it so severely punished; *how shall we escape if we neglect the great salvation* published by Jesus Christ? This is the purport of his reasoning; and now let us consider the weight of it. If God descends from heaven to teach, there must be some great reason for his coming, which will render those exceedingly guilty

who do not hear him. Thereforeit must be our duty to listen to his words, and study his doctrine, that we may understand it and receive the benefit of it for the salvation of our souls. We may put this off as a matter of no consequence, and escape for the present. The man who tells us of these things out of a pulpit, has no power to punish us; but nevertheless God will not be neglected: he who vindicated his law, shall vindicate his gospel; and then what will become of us? what shall we say for ourselves in that dreadful day, when the reasonings and reserves of every heart shall be exposed and confuted? If the question is demanded of us, how it came to pass that we were so ignorant of the gospel, and so inattentive to its instruction? shall we answer, that we were too busy? What greater business can any man find in this vain world, than to provide for the saving of his soul? If his business could bring the whole world into his possession, what good would that do him? The man that had the whole world for his own, would probably be the greatest fool in it; and care or pleasure would soon destroy him. Yet they who can get but a very small part of the world, and must soon lose even that, make their business an excuse, and have no time to bestow upon their everlasting interest.

The importance of the salvation spoken of in the text is farther shewn by the manner in which it was recommended to the world. It was attested by signs and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; all intended to raise the attention of mankind, and convince them that they must be lost if they neglected to hear what was so powerfully recommended. Add to all this the amiable, as well as the excellent character of its great Preacher; whose

life was spent in teaching; whose only business in the world was to save those, many of whom are too busy to hear him. He condescended to the ignorance of the poor; was compassionate to sinners; argued patiently with the perverse and obstinate; and accommodated himself to the wants of all. At last he tasted death for every man; for you that hear, and for me that speak; and by his exaltation after his sufferings hath shewed us the encouragement we have, and the reward we shall receive, if we follow his example. Nothing but hardness of heart can hinder us from partaking of the benefits of our heavenly calling; as it hindered the people in the wilderness from reaching the promised land. We are therefore to *take heed*, as the Apostle forewarns us, *lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* This Egypt, this wicked world, in which we live, must not withdraw our affections, and put us out of humour with the manner and the way of trial, by which God shall be pleased to carry us forward in our progress through this wilderness. And we are to exhort one another against the *deceitfulness of sin* *. We can see how grossly the disobedient Israelites were *deceived*, in preferring *Egypt* to *Canaan;* and we wonder at them, that they should be so perverse and brutish: let us then not be cheated as they were beguiled of their inheritance? They did *not believe* the promises of God; and if we are deceived it must be for the same reason. The rest of Canaan was better than the bondage of Egypt; and the service of God is better to us now than the bondage of sin; which can only interrupt the happiness of the servants of God, and fill them with disappointment

* Heb. iii. 13.

and bitterness. Miserable is the situation of a Christian, who does not look forward, and press forward, to the promised Rest. He has left Egypt; and there is no better entertainment in this wilderness, than the hope of getting well out of it. But if instead of this, he is only looking back and wishing for the world which he has renounced; he is that *double minded man*, who is *unstable in all his ways;* neither a man of the world, nor a Christian; neither easy with God, nor without him. There cannot be a more unprofitable and unhappy character. It is said of the Israelites in the wilderness, that their *heart was not whole* with God, neither continued they stedfast in his covenant. How many fall under the same censure! they give a portion of their heart to God, and another much greater to the world.

When the Apostle is entering upon the more mysterious parts of this Epistle, he upbraids the Hebrews with their unskilfulness in the word of God. They contented themselves with the first elements of Christian instruction, and neglected the mysteries of the scriptures; living, as children do, upon *milk*, with little appetite and strength to admit more solid nourishment*. Some think they are learned enough, if they never get beyond their catechism: some never get so far. And it is common to plead in excuse, that little as their knowledge is, they know more good than they do, and have already more learning than they practise: not considering that the scripture abounds with many great and excellent mysteries, which have nothing practical in them, but so far only as they elevate the mind, and by bringing our affections nearer to God, dispose us to do his will

* See chap. v. 12, 13.

with more love and cheerfulness; and consequently to do more of it, and to better effect: which is a matter of infinite importance, and now too little attended to. The Christian must be progressive; he must *go on* from the beginning of knowledge to the *perfection** of it. He ought to know more of God every day; otherwise he may think of him less, till he totally forgets him: and then he is in danger of falling into that state, out of which men cannot be renewed unto repentance. When the gospel, which a man had received, has not power to lead him forward, there is no new gospel to awaken him: when the most powerful medicine God ever made hath lost its effect, what other can we apply?

So long as the soul is in a growing state, the blessing of heaven continues with it, and the grace of God brings it on to farther improvement: but if it is out of culture, thorns and briars get possession of it, and its end is to be burned. When thorns and briars shall be planted in Paradise, then such careless Christians may expect to be admitted into heaven.

From the consideration of Christ's Priesthood we are exhorted to *draw near with faith*, and partake of his blessing, by attending upon his church and his ordinances; not *forsaking the assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is* †. The Jews, I fear, in the worst of times, were more zealous in attending their public services and sacrifices, than some of those who call themselves Christians. In the best days of the Church, it was always the manner of some few to absent themselves from the religious assemblies of the Christians: but what would St. *Paul* have said, if he had lived to these times, when perhaps not one half of the people are at the public prayers; not one quar-

* Chap. vi. 1. † Chap. x. 22, &c.

ter of them at the sacrament? and they have no persecution to fear, as the primitive Christians had; who attended their worship at the hazard of their lives. It must be owing to mere idleness and indifference; for however business may be pleaded on the ordinary days of the week, it cannot be pleaded on the Sunday. This truth I must suppose them to know; that if their Saviour is a *Priest*, they must partake of the *sacrifice* he offers for their salvation. But there is another dreadful truth, which they do not think of; that, to those, who do not partake of this sacrifice for sin, there remaineth *no other*; but a certain *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*. If he who *despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who do this despite to the spirit of grace**, by neglecting the great atonement that was made by Christ himself for the sins of the world? *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*†, and be made an example of divine vengeance: and what else can they expect, who refuse to accept of the sacrifice of Christ, by which alone the *fiery indignation* of God can be turned away from their own persons? No words are sufficient to express their danger: O that they could see it themselves, and would consider of it, and not trust to such frivolous excuses as will stand them in no stead in the day of visitation!

To encourage us in our Christian warfare, the Apostle sets before us at large the examples of the Saints of old, who were all saved by leading a life of faith‡: enduring every trial and conquering every enemy, on this great principle. There never was

* Chap. x. 26, &c. † Chap. x. 31.
‡ See chap. xi. of this Epistle.

any other way of salvation from the beginning of the world, but this way of faith. All the Saints of God who found acceptance with him, depended upon his word and promise for such things as they could not see; and either forsook the pleasures of the world, or contradicted its errors, and endured its reproaches, for his sake. We may plead the business of life, and the cares of life; but they had their business and their cares as well as we; yet they loved God, and made it their first care to be saved. The race we are to run may have its difficulties: indeed, if it is a *race*, it cannot be without them: but we are *encompassed with a cloud of witnesses* *, all testifying that this *RACE* may be run, and the prize obtained; because they did actually perform it, and are entitled to the crown of victory. What hinders us from doing the same; but that we are retarded by some *weight*, which we are not careful to divest ourselves of and *lay aside*? We do not strive against that sin, whatever it may be, which most easily besets us, and is never to be subdued but by faith and prayer, and self-denial; faith in better things than this world can bestow; and prayer for that grace which may assist us in doing what our strength will never accomplish.

Great is the influence which the example of God's faithful servants will have upon our minds, if we meditate upon it. They were men of like passions with ourselves, and were not without their weaknesses: Sin put on the same deceitful appearance to them as to us: and they had the scorn of an overbearing world to resist, as we have now. Their example, while it instructs, will animate and encourage us. But greater than all is the example of our blessed Saviour himself: therefore we are directed to *look*

* Chap. xii. 1.

*unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God**. What are the troubles we are accustomed to, compared with the agonies of the cross? What is the contempt of silly empty people, who call themselves the world, compared with the disgrace of hanging naked as a malefactor before a multitude, who mocked at the punishment as a proof that he who suffered it was an impostor? Nothing was ever so full of apparent disgrace, as the character of Jesus Christ at his passion. How distressing and almost distracting is it, to be innocent, and yet seem to be guilty? This is a piercing trial to an honest mind. To affect to be great when we are mean, and powerful when we are weak, exposes us to the scorn of every enemy; and this the enemies of Christ laid to his charge, and gratified themselves with every malicious expression that could add to the apparent infamy of his sufferings. Yet all this shame he patiently endured, *for the joy that was set before him.* This we are to consider under all our trials. God does not lay upon us any grief or chastening, for its own sake; but to correct our minds, and give us a title to that joy, which shall be the reward of patient suffering. Thus we shall not be weary and faint in our minds. I grant it is a severe trial to mortal man, to deserve good and receive evil: but to this we are all called, as the followers of a crucified Saviour. The Son of God was made *perfect through sufferings;* and if God is our father, we must expect that he will chasten us; if he does not, then are we *bastards and not sons* †. Bastards are often forsaken by their parents, and left to grow up without correction: consequently to be

* Chap. xii. 2. † Chap. xii. 8.

brought by the tendency of their unreformed nature to misery and destruction: but no Christian would wish for such a privilege: he judges it far better to suffer in hope, than to be at his ease, as one whom God hath neglected.

From the description given of the Church as a spiritual society, the Christian is to learn the dignity of his own character, and to conduct himself in a manner suitable to his station. He seems outwardly like other men; but inwardly he has an honourable place in the kingdom of spirits: he is in the company of angels, saints, and martyrs; he is under the dominion of God as his king and lawgiver; he is a student of wisdom in the school that has sent out so many sons unto glory; he is within the covenant that is sealed by the blood of Christ for his purification and redemption; his name is registered in heaven, as an heir of immortality: he knows that while the mighty empires of the earth are changing and passing away into oblivion, the *kingdom* of which he is a member shall *never be moved**. *The earth shall be shaken,* and the *heavens* shall melt away; but his inheritance is secure. The same *God* who is *a consuming fire* to an impenitent world, will be to him a Protector and a Saviour, if he *serves* him *acceptably,* in this short time of his probation, *with reverence and godly fear.*

The last chapter of the Epistle consists wholly of exhortations relating to the great duties of charity, purity, submission, and a detachment from the world.

All parties of men are bound together by a common interest; which, though in some cases even wicked and absurd, and little better than a conspiracy, will

* Chap. xii. 28.

have its effect in disposing them to espouse the cause, and prefer the company and conversation of one another. Now as there is no common interest so important as that of Christians, it ought to produce such a friendship as is superior to every other relation or connexion. *Remember them that are in bonds*, says the Apostle, *as bound with them;* that is, as considering that they are members of the body of Christ, and that one member cannot suffer without affecting the rest. The same rule is applicable to every other condition of life; as if it had been said; remember them that are *poor*, as partaking of their poverty; remember them that are *sick*, as being sick with them: for thence we shall feel the same obligation to relieve *them* as to relieve *ourselves;* and much greater comfort, because *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Purity of life is another virtue essential to the Christian character. We are to consider ourselves as brought into that heavenly society, wherein are angels, saints, and martyrs: then, how shocking will it be to reflect, that an impure Christian is impure in the company of Angels; drunk, and like a beast, in the company of Angels; covetous, ambitious, self-interested, and deceitful, in the company of Angels. Hence you will understand how a wicked Christian is worse than a wicked Heathen, and will have a more severe account to give; because he adds affront and insult to his wickedness; so that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for him.

From the consideration that true religion has always had the same object from the beginning of the world, namely, that of bringing men to God by the way of faith and patience; and that *Jesus Christ is the same*

yesterday, to day, and for ever; yesterday, under the Law; *to day,* under the Gospel; and *for ever,* in the kingdom of Glory: we should learn to be stedfast in this ancient plan, and look with a suspicious eye upon all pretended reformations and improvements of modern Christians, who are inventing new modes of faith, and would shew us what they call a more excellent way. Vanity is always fond of novelty: you see it every day in the common change of fashions: and therefore vain men are carried about with every wind of doctrine, propagated by those who are ignorant of the antiquity of that religion, by which all believers have been and are now to be saved. If men did but study the scripture on a right principle, without a spirit of party, and enquired duly into primitive Christianity, they would be ashamed of the little mean differences and distinctions which divide their hearts, and break them into sects; filling them with a Pharisaical pride against one another; as if the *end of the commandment* were *not charity,* but hatred, contempt, and ill-will.

To prevent this, the Apostle instructs the Hebrews to *obey them that have the rule over them,* their lawful Pastors and Teachers, whom Christ hath appointed to keep them in the way of peace; and whose studies and labours must qualify them to inform and direct the ignorant better than they can direct themselves. An abuse of the principles of the reformation, which can never be sufficiently lamented, has at length made every man his own teacher, and established a spirit of self-exaltation and opposition, than which no temper is more hateful to God, because none is so destructive of piety and peace. Christians should leave that to the sons of the earth, who are disputing for power, places and pre-eminence; with whom gain is godli-

ness, because they have no God but Mammon and Belial, no views nor hopes beyond the present life.

This leads me back to the great source of all moral instruction, on which the Apostle hath so frequently insisted, and with which I shall conclude; I mean, the necessity of a detachment from the world in all those who would be followers of Jesus Christ. Our master was one who came to disown the world, and to be disowned by it; he came to his own and was not received by them; he was hated for his truth, reviled for his works of goodness and mercy, and at his death was led out of the city of Jerusalem to *suffer without the gate**, as one disowned, and cast out, and delivered over to the world of the Gentiles; all of which was foreshewn by the great yearly sacrifice, whose blood was first offered in the Tabernacle, and then it was carried out to be *burned without the camp*. On this the Apostle raises an affecting exhortation, that we ought to *go out after him, bearing his reproach*: even the reproach of being despised and disowned and *cast out* by the world as he was. Every Christian, though he is neither with the camp, nor with the city of Jerusalem, has some attachment which he is called upon to leave, and to be despised for so doing: he must go out either from the wisdom of the world, or the fashion of the world, or the party and the interests of worldly people; as Christ went out of the gate of Jerusalem, and as Abraham forsook his family and friends, to obey the calling of God. The unbelieving Jews looked with contempt on those who left them to follow a crucified Master, whom they had led out of their city as a malefactor and delivered to the Gentiles; and the world will cast re-

* Chap. xiii. 12.

proach upon all those who forsake its opinions and customs. But, as the Jews themselves were soon afterwards driven out from their city, and their whole œconomy was dissolved; so shall the world itself be destroyed, and its inhabitants shall be turned out from the place in which they trusted. When this shall happen, they have no other place in reserve; but we shall find that city, that *continuing city*, which we have so long looked after, *whose builder and maker is God.*

SERMONS.

* TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

GEORGE,

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH.

MY LORD,

WHEN I read the excellent Discourses you have given to the Public, I feel as if the world could not want any thing of the same kind from myself; and I consider your Lordship as one of the last persons to whom I ought to offer them. But, as they come abroad in consequence of your own *advice* to the Author, which, as you are now become my Diocesan, has the force of a *command*, they are sure of a favourable reception from yourself; and I am persuaded they will, on that account, be better received by the Public.

In my late Lectures on the *Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures*, I have carried the apostolical mode of interpreting them as far as I thought it needful; and have laid down rules from the scripture itself, by the observation of which, good and learned men may carry it much farther. I have therefore omitted, for the present, the publication of many discourses of the expository kind, which I have by me, and have confined myself chiefly to such subjects as tend to make the Christian wiser and happier, and more useful in the conduct of his life.

* This Dedication was prefixed to the two Volumes of Sermons published in the life-time of the Bishop.

I have followed your Lordship's judgment in the choice of one moral subject with which these volumes are concluded*; and I wish young men of fortune would consider it for themselves, as earnestly as I have considered it for them.

Every age hath its favourite errors; to which fashion gives dignity and influence. When these come in my way, I never spare them: yet I endeavour to correct them as mildly and prudently as I can. But when I say this, I am sensible there is an Author, whose happy manner and temper, on such occasions, few will be able to equal, or even to imitate.

The present time gives me an opportunity of congratulating the Church of England on the addition of such a Prelate to the already-excellent and learned bench of English Bishops: and it would be criminal in me, if I were not to add my own to the general voice of the Public, on this occasion.

That there may be in the diocese the same disposition, as there will be in your Lordship to promote the peace, piety, and edification of all orders of people in it, is the wish, and shall be the prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's ever-obliged Friend,

And devoted humble Servant,

WILLIAM JONES.

NAYLAND,
May 30, 1790.

* The Sermons above alluded to are the 13th and 14th in the 4th Volume.

SERMON I.

FRET NOT THYSELF. PSALM XXXVII. 1.

It is of more importance to every man, that his mind should be at peace, than that his body should be in health. We use great caution for the preservation of our bodily ease; and are at great expences for the restoring of it when lost. But as a restless mind is a worse evil, and hath also an effect in impairing the faculties of the body, all proper preservatives are diligently to be sought for and applied.

We are sent hither, into a world, where sin produces a thousand disorders: we are therefore born to meet with such things as will disturb and vex us, more or less, according to our different principles and propensities.

We must see right invaded, innocence oppressed, wisdom disregarded, merit neglected, justice hated, truth misrepresented and opposed, hypocrisy, rapine and violence unpunished, and sometimes applauded.

At these things the wisest of mankind are apt to be agitated with unreasonable indignation: while the weak, ignorant, and impatient, are driven to despair, madness and suicide.

When persons of delicate habits, and tender irritable minds, are without principle; which is too often the case in this age of *uninformed sentiment;* the prospect is dreadful. For when such are disappointed, they become desperate; accusing Providence, when they ought to accuse themselves; and flying

out of life, in a rage at those evils, which, perhaps, need not have been; or might have been cured; or at least, rendered very supportable.

Our blessed Saviour, knowing how his disciples were exposed to all the trials common to other men, and to other uncommon ones brought upon them by their profession, gives them this necessary advice—*In your patience possess ye your souls.* Of which passage, the physiology is strict and true: for the impatient are not in possession of their souls: they are no more masters of themselves than persons divested of their reason. And the two cases are so much alike, that the fashion of the times hath confounded them; by making no distinction, in cases of suicide, between the wickedness of impatience, and the weakness of lunacy.

And what can we find within ourselves to give us patience? Human prudence may be allowed the wisdom of experience, to make us cautious; but it hath nothing positive, to give us strength: no gifts, no doctrines, no promise; all of which are necessary to us in our present state.

The pride of heathen philosophy affected an indifference to pain and pleasure; and having adopted the principles of a blind fatality in nature, fled to *insensibility,* as the grand remedy for all the evils of life.

Under the state of the gospel, zeal and piety bring Christian people into difficulties, by exposing them to the hatred of the world. To avoid which, we are under a temptation of betaking ourselves to the convenient policy of *offending nobody:* and, to put a face upon our pusillanimity, we call it *discretion;* the cheapest of all the virtues: because the reputation of it is obtained by doing nothing; at least, by doing no good, for fear of interrupting our own ease. The

brightness of the rainbow is attended by another circle, of an inferior light wherein the order of the colours is inverted. So is the bright circle of the virtues attended by another set, of a spurious kind, which mock the true; and this faint-hearted discretion is one of them. It may please us for a time, but it will deceive us at last.

The thing to be desired, therefore, is a true, *religious* serenity of mind. We call it *patience*, in respect to the ways of men; and *faith* or *resignation*, in respect to the ways of God.

This is to be attained

First, from reasonable consideration;

Secondly, from the rules of prudence;

Thirdly, from the practice of piety.

The text saith, when the context is added, *Fret not thyself because of the ungodly!* The troubles of good men arise chiefly from the ways of evil men; of which we have many examples from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; whose enemies were the greatest of villains and hypocrites, from Herod the king down to Judas the traitor. When good men trouble one another, they do it by mistake: but a bad man cannot act as such, without molesting society, and injuring his neighbours. Vice, as a cause, will have its proper effects, as brutes, by invariable instinct, follow the ferocity or uncleanness of their natures. Idleness will rob and plunder and run in debt; avarice will cheat: error will persecute the truth which it hates; ambition, to raise itself, must reduce other men; malice must gratify itself with lying and defamation; and revenge must live, like a vulture, upon blood.

When we see these things, we are to consider, that the wicked who disturb the world are themselves in

a very perilous situation; which is abundantly described in the psalm from whence the text is taken. It is observed of them,

First, that they are all weak and mortal like ourselves: that they shall soon be cut down like the grass and withered even as the green herb. We are all under one common sentence of death; and no man hath in this respect any pre-eminence above another. However great and powerful a sinner may be in his wickedness, he must be cut down and withered. When we lament our own mortality, we may lament his; and so long as we can lament his fate we shall be more patient towards his failings.

But the condition of his life, while it lasts, is not such as it may appear to be from some partial circumstances: it is unhappy and ensnaring, in its best estate. If we find a man's ill humour troublesome to us, we may be assured it is much more troublesome to himself. He who giveth light, must first be illuminated: he who troubleth others, must first be troubled himself. The sea is agitated by the wind, before the ship is tossed about and endangered by it; so the people who disturb mankind are *like the troubled sea*, which can never rest, but casteth up mire and dirt, and defiles its own waves with the foulness of its own bottom.

The temporary success of a wicked man is a snare to him. His prosperity, while it lasts, is not a blessing, as to good men, but a temptation and a curse. Therefore it is said, in the book of Proverbs, *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them**: it shall beget a blind confidence and presumption, which shall lead them on from one ruinous step to another. It shall furnish them with all the means and instruments of

* Prov. i. 32.

corruption, and bring them into captivity to the worst of passions: in which miserable condition, they may be so absurd as to be proud of themselves: but certainly they are no objects of envy to us. They may despise our lot; but we have all the reason in the world to pity them; and so long as we are under the influence of pity, we shall not be disturbed with anger.

We are farther to consider, that evil doers are not only mortal, but worse. The man who is executed is more miserable than he who dieth in the course of nature. Besides the evil of mortality, the evil of vengeance awaits a bad man: and while he is whetting the weapon of malice, a sword of judgment, which he doth not see, is hanging over him, ready to drop upon his head. The eye of God is upon his ways, though not in his thoughts; and when the measure of his sins is filled up, he shall be rooted out. While he is counselling for himself, or against better men, the Lord, who sees what he is upon and that his *day is coming*, is represented as laughing his confidence to scorn: knowing, that instead of prevailing against the just, he is sharpening a sword which will be turned against himself, and go through his own heart. "I myself," saith the Psalmist, "have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourish-"ing like a green bay-tree. I went by and lo he "was gone; I sought him but his place could no "where be found." His power is at an end; he can trouble us no longer; he is gone, as if he had never been.

Such is the real lot of evil men, under the flattering appearances of their temporary successes: therefore, "grieve not thyself at him, whose way "doth prosper; against the man who doeth after

" evil counsels—wicked doers shall be rooted out;
" and they that patiently abide the Lord, those shall
" inherit the land."

From which words we learn, that our peace will be farther promoted by a consideration of the promises made to the godly: who have this assurance, that all things work together for good to them that love God; that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; not to secure them absolutely from trouble, but to exercise them therewith, and then to deliver them out of it. Some men seem to be sent into the world for the trial of others. They answer the end of winds and storms, which purge the atmosphere of its vapours; and by agitating the roots of trees and plants, make them grow the faster. Of such we are to remember, that as the weather is under God's direction, so are they under the restraints of his power. He permits them to go to certain lengths for purposes known to himself: but they can go no farther.

Enemies answer so many purposes, that they are in some degree necessary to every good man. The army stationed in an enemy's country is vigilant; which, at home, where there is no danger, would be dissolute. So in private life, a man's enemies oblige him to live more prudently and virtuously; that no advantage may be given to those who will be glad to take it. His enemies may be farther necessary, for the punishment of his sins. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him* *. Whence the inference is natural; that his life may be less peaceable, because his ways want to be corrected. The conscience of David, in his troubles, put this interpretation upon the curses of Shimei. Thus may ill men be of use to drive us

* Prov. xvi. 7.

back to our duty, as wild beasts drive man from the woods and the forests into the safety of civil society. And if God, when such things happen, will be pleased to accept of the railings and reproaches of an enemy towards the pardon of our sins; we should be thankful for them. There would be no absurdity (and, supposing them to come from the impenitent, no want of charity) in praying for more of them.

There are virtues of forbearance and fortitude which cannot be called into action, but by the provocations of the injurious; and the more unjust they are, the less we ought to be offended: for here, we are to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; and to consider, how he endured the contradiction of sinners in his ministry; how pride, malice, avarice, and absurdity, were for ever working against him, to pervert his sayings, confound his reasonings, and turn the hearts of the people away from him. This we should think of, when our reasonings, however right and true, are neglected by the pride of false science, or overborne by the importunity and impudence of error. If, when we have laboured to do wisely, we are reported to have done foolishly; or to have done wrong, when we have done right, it must occasion a struggle in the passions; but a little patience will keep things from growing worse, and a little time may set them all to rights. Thus did our Blessed Master commit himself to the righteous judgment of God: and we have a promise, that if we commit our way to him, he will "make our "righteousness as clear as the light, and our just deal-"ing as the noon-day." Truth shall dispel the clouds which envy raises. The Priests and Rulers of the Jews prevailed for a time against Jesus Christ; but their imaginations were vain; he was soon settled on

the holy hill of Sion, and received the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The lot of every pious man is after the same pattern. He may seem to fall, but he shall not be cast away, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The life of a Christian is a kind of paradox, in which apparent evil is real good. So the Apostle describes the state of himself and his fellow Christians, as of men who were living and dying at the same time, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. We are impatient, till evil is removed; but if it is turned into good, that is better for us: and the time of retribution will come, when all things that offend shall be cast out; all the seeming errors of the present time shall be rectified.

This consideration will be sufficient, if every other should fail us. It was this which supported the martyrs of Jesus Christ under all the scorn and cruelty of their Jewish and Heathen enemies. They had the earnest of their hope from the case of the first martyr Stephen; to whose eyes that prospect of glory was presented, which is prepared for all those who suffer for the sake of truth and righteousness.

2dly. When we have laid up these considerations in our minds, we must also be careful to follow such *rules of prudence*, as the Scripture hath given, and experience hath justified. Peace of mind is not a speculation, but a practical art; the result of proper information and prudent attention.

First then, it is necessary we should be possessed and penetrated by a true sense of our own unworthiness in the sight of God and man. When any person over-rates himself, he expects honours which are not due to him, and is disappointed and vexed if he does not receive them. The lunatic, who has

made himself a king in his own imagination, raves if he is not treated as such by people in their senses. Lighter cases, but the same in kind, occur to us every day; and men make such mistakes about themselves, as bring them into great trouble: whereas an humble mind is not easily hurt. When we have abased ourselves, we cannot be thrown down: but he that has placed himself aloft in his own estimation, is exposed to many a downfall. Humanity will be tender to a vain man, and the religious will pity him; but the inconsiderate always take a delight in pulling him down.

The order and regularity of a *methodical life* hath great effect in keeping the mind recollected and undisturbed. When people live, as too many do, not by rule, but slothfully and by chance, their affairs are perplexed; and when they are out of temper with themselves, they are less able to bear with the perverseness of others. While every thing about them is wrong, their minds can never be right; but great inconveniences are avoided by œconomical attention, and the regularity of an industrious spirit; which is one of the greatest blessings in life.

Moderation and contentment are absolutely necessary to our peace; for when our ways and means are exceeded by our wants, we must either fall into distress, or be forced upon mean and base expedients; to the loss of our honour, and the wounding of our consciences. Ungoverned appetite is either sick or poor: often both at once; and poverty, which we have brought upon ourselves, is always vexatious. We never see people happy who outlive their fortunes; but generally fretful, restless and quarrelsome; or dejected and melancholy; and this may serve to shew

us what a large share of the evil we complain of, is of our own making.

Moderation, as it signifies temperance in meat and drink, hath a great effect upon the temper. It keeps the mind cool as well as the body; and the influence of the one upon the other is undisputed. The sick man is careful of his diet, and lives sparingly in a fever, lest he should inflame his distemper. We are all sick, of sin; and fretfulness is the hectic of the mind; which must be corrected by the same regimen as reduces a feverish heat in the body. Christianity gives us *knowledge* for the correcting of every error; but it bids us *add temperance*. Devils go not out without *fasting*; and it is as true, that evil passions cannot be kept under, but by habits of self-denial. He who can deny himself not only reduces his mind to a temperate state, but disarms the malice of his enemies; because he does that voluntarily, for his own good, which another would do maliciously to his hurt; he mortifies himself.

In the next place let us beware of being hurt by little offences and slight accidents. Great calamities work upon the rational and manly affections of the mind. Small affronts have nothing to work upon but our pride; a tender and irritable principle. We are so apt to be surprised by light occasions of vexation, that they often give us more trouble than heavy causes of affliction, against which we are better provided. We arm ourselves against lions and tygers, or keep out of their way; while we are often tormented with sleepless nights from rats and insignificant noises.

To cure this infirmity, the mind should accustom itself to great objects; it should present to itself the

dreadful dangers of temptation; the future certain approaches of death; the just judgment of God; the torments of hell; the joys of heaven; and while it is thus acting like a man, it will not be fretted like a child, with little things.

It will also lessen our embarrassment, on many occasions, if we make it a rule to be silent before our enemies. If a man is under a mistake, or slow of apprehension, or poisoned with misinformation; we may do him and ourselves good by discoursing with him: but if we once discover that he has a bad, that is, a malicious design, we should make it a rule never to talk with him, we have no chance with such a person but by being silent. If we speak never so long, we shall do him no good; but only give him an opportunity of misreporting our words, and turning them against us. The Scribes and Pharisees, from the malice of their hearts, *urged* our Saviour *vehemently to speak of many things* *; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him. Malice will work in other men now, as it did in them: and as our Saviour himself was silent, when he could do no good by speaking; there are many occasions in life, when we shall very much lessen our danger and trouble by following the wisdom of his example.

It will also contribute greatly to our peace, if we view things on the bright side, and make the best of them, in our private meditations and in our conversation. As all lead contains some silver in it, so hath all evil some good, which a skilful mind may extract. The sagacious bee, when it traverses the fields, turns not aside from a poisonous flower; but is possessed of a chemical art, which can draw honey from every

* Luke xi. 53.

plant: so saith the Apostle, supposing us to have the like faculty, *in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God.*

3rdly. Such are the considerations with which we are to fortify our minds, and the rules by which we are to direct our lives, for the preservation of our tranquillity. But I am now to observe, that all other rules and considerations will be ineffectual, without the *practice of piety;* that is, without the prayers and devotions of a Christian. When we would move men to consider and learn, we tell them that peace of mind is an art; but when we would move them to pray, we must remind them, that it is a gift. The composure of a devout mind is called *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;* it must therefore come from God himself; and if we do not ask for it, we cannot have it. *O, pray for the peace of Jerusalem,* saith the Psalmist to the Church: so must we admonish every individual, "O pray for the peace of thine "own heart, if thou dost expect to find it." Our religion hath every wise doctrine, and every wholesome precept; but, throughout the whole, *Faith* acts as the sovereign *power,* and the universal *remedy;* without which there can be neither the comfort of Hope nor the patience of Charity. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:* and why doth the world overcome so many, but because they are without it? and, consequently without prayer, which is the speech of faith, and the evidence of our spiritual life? If we *live,* we shall *speak:* and that we may never be at a loss for proper expressions, the whole book of Psalms is provided for private as well as public use, and fitted for every occasion that can befall us.

The advantages of keeping up this communion

with God, are too many to be enumerated, and too great to be described: but certainly nothing composes the mind under all its trials like that great expedient of opening our grief to him who is able to help us, and hath promised never to leave us nor forsake us. Great and instructive in the issue of it, is the example of the good king Hezekiah; who when he had received that letter of defiance and blasphemy from the king of Assyria, went into the Temple, *and spread it before the Lord**; and by his prayer obtained a signal deliverance to himself and his people. We cannot even present ourselves before God, without this good effect; that we are thereby instantly detached from the world which troubles us. We dare not, we cannot, give way to the weaknesses of Nature, while his eye is upon us, to restrain us. It is related of one of our kings, whose devotion supported him under all the trials of persecution and martyrdom: that when he had received some afflicting intelligence, while he was upon his knees at the public prayers, he continued in the same posture till they were ended; and then he relapsed into the condition of a man, and retired to give vent to his sorrow.

If we could go into heaven, the world, with all its cares, would be left behind us: and although this cannot be, so long as we are in the body; yet we may at all times *lift up our hearts*, and ascend thither with our thoughts and affections. Faith can fix an anchor there, which will keep us steady under all the changes and chances of this mortal life.

* 2 Kings xix. 14.

SERMON II.

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE.
COLOSS. III. 2.

It can hardly be denied, that all men are desirous of happiness; though, at the same time, it must be confessed, some are so miserably mistaken in the pursuit, that it may be difficult to give any rational account of their proceedings. They either think that to be happiness, which is not so: or, if they are right as to the object, they have such prejudices concerning the means of obtaining it, as render all their endeavours ineffectual.

I shall make it my business to shew you in this discourse, that till we *set our affections on things above*, no true happiness is to be found.

As the affections of man are active and restless in their nature, they must have their objects; and if these objects are not the *things above*, they will be the things below; and if these things are in their nature unsatisfactory, such an attachment can terminate in nothing but disappointment. The wisest of mankind, who had experienced all the heights of worldly felicity, did long ago pass sentence of condemnation upon the things of the world, as the instruments of vanity and vexation; yet few can find in their hearts to take his word, till they have made their unsuccessful experiments, and are convinced by the issue of them. It is a truth, which some happily discover

in due time, and which all will see at last, that to expect substantial happiness from the things of this earth, is as impertinent as to seek for the living among the dead. That no real good can be found here, is evident from this one consideration, that whatsoever we find we cannot keep possession of it. Suppose the things never so good in themselves, yet such are the conditions on which we hold them, that they cannot confer upon us the happiness we are looking for. If the cup of life were to be mixed up at the will of the most skilful epicure, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time, are ingredients which can never be excluded; and they will never fail to embitter the whole. For our life is but a vapour, a thing of no substance, and liable to be dissipated by the next rough blast. If a man is unmindful of this, he is in a state of stupefaction; and stupefaction is not enjoyment; if it lies upon his mind, it will as surely have its effect, as the sound of a passing bell, near at hand, will spoil a concert of music. Besides this, the objects so eagerly sought after, are but shadows and delusions; which borrow their greatest value from the error of our imaginations. All the things we behold at present are but the lowest works of our Almighty Creator, and are to endure but for a limited time. The world itself, as well as they that inhabit it, must pass away, as a garment which is worn out, and must be changed for that which is eternal. This being the case, there is something in the soul of man which thirsteth after greater things than are here to be met with. There is in those, who do not extinguish it, an appetite, which will not be satisfied or put off with trifles. When a man has tried the world, and found it full of labour and vanity and disappointment, what can he

think? If he thinks at all, he must conclude, either that God made him to disappoint him, or that there are other better objects on which he ought to set his affections: and if there are such objects, then there is in man an appetite toward them; for where there is no appetite, there can be no enjoyment. But earthly things, when they are abused, have this unhappy effect, that they spoil the taste: and therefore it is said, that if any man *love the world*, the love of the Father is not in him. It is wisely represented to us in the parable, that they whose affections were engaged by worldly occupations, partook not of that heavenly feast, which was provided for them: but the *halt*, the *lame*, and the *blind*, being disengaged from the world, were ready for the enjoyment of superior pleasures. And every wise man will endeavour to keep himself in this state of disengagement: he will be thankful to God for any of those losses or disappointments, which serve to remove the mists that are before the eyes of great men, and busy men, and men of pleasure. So long as his mind hath the use of its sight, he will consider every thing in this life under that relation which it bears to eternity: and this will at once lessen the value of such things as have their end as well as their beginning in this life. As often as he looks forward to eternity, he will wish to secure himself a portion there; and with this view he will attend to the methods proposed to him in divine Revelation. He will seek for such information, as shall not only improve his head but purify his heart: for the word of God cannot make us *wise unto salvation*, but as it makes us in the end partakers of it. He will consider his *actions*, as the only sure evidences of his *affections;* for all but idiots act upon such principles as they have, whether good or bad; and

therefore the affections of all men are distinguished by their fruits.

Though the things above, of which the text speaks, are not really present to us in themselves, they are present to us in their influences; and in some respect they are also present as the reward of those that seek them. How much pleasure does the miser conceive, in his own imagination, only by contemplating that treasure, which he never uses! Surely then, the Christian may feast his mind with the contemplation of that heavenly treasure, which will be sure not to disappoint him. While his body is circumscribed by this world, and under the dominion of the elements, his heart may be where his treasure is; and thus he may anticipate the joys of heaven, before he is put into actual possession of them. His present enjoyment is in his *hope;* one of the greatest pleasures in the world: indeed, so great a pleasure, that some have supposed all the happiness of man to consist in it. They have discovered, that the affections of men are alive and active, so long as they are kept in expectation; but dead and flat when they have nothing more to look for: and, on this ground, they have affirmed that human happiness is nothing but expectation: a sort of chace, whose pleasure is not in the end, but in the pursuit. If this be so, then the vicissitudes of human life, are one continued series of deception; and no hope is worth entertaining, but the hope of heaven; the only hope that will not make us ashamed at last. It is true, that if we are never so sharp-sighted, all our contemplation will not give us an adequate conception of the things above. We are told, they are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive them: but it is sufficient for us to know,

that they have this one property of lasting for ever. If we remove our affections from the happiness of this world, because we cannot be sure of it; it is a good reason for setting our affections on things above, because they afford that happiness which cannot be taken away from us: and which will probably be advancing by steps unknown to us, through all the ages of eternity.

We may form some conjecture concerning the sufficiency and fulness of this happiness, by considering the power of that God who has engaged himself to make us happy. If we look around us, we are astonished at the manifestations of his power and wisdom; and cannot but see, how the elements work together for the benefit and support of this habitable world. Hence it may be concluded, that he who hath made his sun to rise upon us in this lower state of our existence, can bring us, in his own good time, to that unspeakable brightness, in comparison of which, the sun himself shall disappear, as the stars are drowned in the light of the morning. For God himself, the fountain of uncreated light, shall enlighten that kingdom, which hath been prepared for us from the beginning of the world. It is said of the new Jerusalem, that *the city* hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

If we consider the structure of an human body; how the eye is exquisitely framed to receive the impressions of the light; the ear to be sensible of sounds; and the skill with which all the organs of circulation and the several instruments of motion are adapted to the kind of life for which the body is now prepared; we can never doubt, but that the same wis-

dom, which even in this fallen state, hath so prepared us for all the functions of this present life, will, in the regeneration of things, fit us in like manner with higher and more perfect faculties for the enjoyment of that life which we have in expectation. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: human nature, with its present weakness, could enjoy nothing amidst that glorious light, which would dazzle and confound all its powers: and therefore, as the Scripture hath greatly expressed it, *mortality* must first be *swallowed up of life*, before we can be capable of enjoying the presence of God, and the glorious scenes of the invisible world.

The man who can raise his mind to the contemplation of these things, will not be mortified when he withdraws himself from the gratifications of sin: for he will find himself above them. A man of years feels no uneasiness because he is without the toys and rattles with which children are delighted: *their* treasure consists in these little things, and their hearts are full of them: but men of skill and science are delighted with what children cannot comprehend. There is just the same difference between the man of pleasure and the man of devotion: the one is a child all his life long: the other is rational and manly in the choice of his objects; which in their nature, are alone worthy of his attention, and capable of satisfying all the highest affections of the mind and understanding. God hath so ordained, that what is our duty is also our present interest and satisfaction; I mean, the interest of our better part. The good man, by his alliance to God, is certainly more happy, as well as more honourable, than he that is allied only to the world; allowing him to be connected with what we usually look upon as the higher part of it.

Should we not think and feel ourselves abundantly happier in the court of Solomon, partakers of his wisdom and splendour, than if we belonged to the train of an Indian prince, who is a black and a savage? Infinitely greater is the difference between the felicity of those who attend upon God, and those who are confined to the pleasures of sense. The eyes of the swine are invincibly directed to the earth, and his neck is inflexible: but man has a countenance directed toward the heaven; and the smallest star that is visible in the firmament, is incomparably brighter than all the diamonds and gold of the earth, even when human art has united and polished them to the greatest advantage. As the glories of the heaven are more excellent than the splendour of the earth, so is the contemplation of heavenly things better than the enjoyment of earthly. The astronomer, who measures the courses of the stars, and observes all the appearances of the sun, is employed more to his own satisfaction, than the wretch who dwells in the bottom of a mine, and is digging there by the light of a taper, in danger of being overwhelmed with the ragged vault that hangs over his head; or stifled with poisonous damps and vapours. In a word, the *greater* and *better* the objects are, of which we are in pursuit, the higher is the satisfaction afforded by them. The angel is happier than the man, because he has greater things before him: and by parity of reason, the Christian is happier than the man of sensuality. If angels are spectators of what passes here below, how must they look down with pity and contempt on the childish agitations of human affections? on the elevations of pride, the uneasiness of ambition, the misery of covetousness, the rage of envy, the torment of lust, the noise of drunkenness, and the foolish ex

plosions of immoderate laughter? He who places his affections on such objects as angels are delighted with, is raised to an higher sphere of life than other mortals. A person in such a state is delivered from the storms of passion, and is above the reach of disappointment. If he meets with any innocent gratifications in his passage through life, they are tasted without terror and enjoyed without remorse. The light of the sun gives more pleasure to him than to other men. If he admires the works of God which he now beholds, he understands them as so many pledges, that God will shew him greater things than he hath yet seen or heard *. If he is in distress, and tossed about upon the waves of a tempestuous world, he has an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, fixed in the region of eternity, and is thereby secured against all the agitations of grief and despair. And is not this an enviable state? Yet it is such a state as we may all obtain. Here ambition is laudable, and will not be punished with disappointment. And let me add, that he who does not aspire to this state, is forgetful

* I have often admired it as a great sentiment in the orator and philosopher of Rome, that men in another life will not only be superior to the sensual pleasures of this life; but that even the virtues required of us in our present state, will then be superfluous and out of place. *Si nobis, cum ex hâc vitâ migraverimus, in beatorum insulis immortale ævum degere liceret, quid opus esset eloquentiâ, cum judicia nulla fierent? Aut ipsis etiam virtutibus? nec enim* fortitudinis *indigeremus, nullo proposito aut labore aut periculo? nec* justitiâ, *cum esset nihil quod appeteretur alieni: nec* temperantiâ *quæ regeret eas, quæ nullæ essent, libidines? ne* prudentiâ *quidem egeremus, nullo delectu proposito bonorum et malorum. Unâ igitur essemus beati cognitione naturæ et scientiâ, quæ sola est deorum vitâ laudanda. Ex quo intelligi potest, cætera necessitatis esse, unum hoc voluptatis.* This is from a fragment of the Discourse of *Cicero*, intitled *Hortensius*; which was extant in the time of *St. Augustine*, and, by his own account, prepared his mind for the purer doctrines of Christianity.

of his profession as a Christian. In the greatest service of the Church, that of the holy communion, the Priest calls upon the people *to lift up their hearts;* to which they give consent, and make answer, *we lift them up unto the Lord.* They use the language of men, who profess to be above the world, and aspire to heavenly things. And this indeed is their proper character. By their baptism they are *risen with Christ* to a new and heavenly state of life; and if they are consistent with themselves, they must think, and speak, and act, as men who are raised to new and sublime expectations. Thus argues the Apostle in the words of the text: *if ye be risen with Christ,* says he, *seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your affection on things above.* If he has overcome death, and we as members of him are partakers of that victory, we are not to lie like the dead *Lazarus,* bound about with the *grave-clothes* of our worldly affection. If Christ sitteth above, as our representative and forerunner; we must rise up from darkness and the shadow of death, to follow him with our hearts and affections; knowing that we shall hereafter follow him in body as well as in spirit. For though it is undoubtedly true, that death shall prevail over our mortal part; yet the grave shall give up our bodies, when he who now sitteth at the right hand of God shall descend from his seat of glory, and call them from the four winds of heaven. This is what the Psalmist alludes to in those remarkable words—*though ye have lien among the pots,* broken to pieces like frail earthen vessels, *yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold:* the Spirit of God, that mystic dove, shall lend its wings to raise you from dissolution, and convey you aloft to the regions of eternity.

This prospect is so well secured to us, that our hopes may now begin to take possession of our inheritance. And this is the encouragement given us by the Apostle, to set our affection on things above. He has another reason, which is indeed but a member of the same argument. For if we are risen with Christ in our *baptism* to a *new life*; it is equally true, that in the same baptism we are *dead with him* to the things of this life. And thence he argues, *if ye be dead with Christ, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject* to such things as are to *perish with the using?* This subjection to perishable things, is the great mistake of mortal man; separating him from the knowledge and love of God; and, consequently, from all the great objects of the world to come. It is not possible to know the things of God, while our hearts are set upon the world. Ignorance of God will cherish earthly affections; and earthly affections will end in a separation from God. One of these cases was exemplified in the heathens; the other in the Jews. The heathens did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so were given up to *vile affections*: the Jews had set their affections on the world, and so lost the knowledge of God. It signifies not which end we begin at: for the issue is the same either way.

Upon the whole then, it is the proper business of man in this world, to set his affections on things above: in this is our wisdom, our wealth, our hope, and our happiness: therefore it should be an affront to the understandings of rational men, to desire them to follow what is so desirable in itself. Let me then take it for granted, that they who hear me, wish to attain to this heavenly practice, and only want to know how it is to be done. To this the answer is

short: consider what your hope is as Christians, and learn what this world is, and then your affections cannot make any mistake, without doing it wilfully. To know that you have an inheritance in a better world, purchased by the death of Christ, and sealed to you by his Resurrection; I say, to know this, and not to desire it is impossible. And on the other hand, to see that the things of this world are vain, deceitful, and perishable; and yet to admire and seek them, is equally impossible. How then does it happen, that we see so few aspiring to the things above, and such multitudes swallowed up by the things on the earth? What can be said, but that men are blind to the deceitfulness of the world, and to the glories of heaven; and so like the blind are wandering out of the way. That any should be found so senseless as to prefer earth to heaven, and sensuality to immortality, is a certain proof, that there is some radical error in our nature, derived to us from the mistake of our first parents, and never to be corrected but by the power of divine Grace, and the diligent study of the word of God. Every man is born with that clay upon his eyes, which must be washed away by him, who was sent from heaven for that purpose; and then he may see all things clearly. Then he may shake off that folly of preferring dust and ashes to the riches of eternity; when things eternal, and things temporal are compared, it seems the easiest thing in the world to choose between them; and yet it is the hardest; because it is impossible to love the things of heaven, without that principle of *faith*, which gives us a sight of them. In this is the great difference between the Christian and the man of the world; that the one walks by sense, and the other by faith. The Christian ascends through faith and hope

to the love of God; and when he has attained to that, his affections are placed where they ought to be.

If you would plainly understand the difference between these two sorts of men, view them upon their death-beds. When death approaches, the Christian finds himself drawing nearer to the objects he has desired; but the man of the world is hasting toward those terrors of the Lord, which he has vainly endeavoured to forget. The one parts with what he never valued, and in exchange looks for that which never can decay: the other is torn away against his will from all he has delighted in, never more to be delighted with any thing. The one leaves his friends, with a certainty of meeting such of them, as are worth finding, in a better world: the other leaves all good men, without the hope of conversing with them any more. The one is at length conveyed by Angels to the bosom of Abraham: the other goes, where he went, who had received the good things in this life.

Who can make this comparison without saying, in the words of Balaam, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Let us then remember, my friends, and let us never forget it, that the righteous dies his death, because in his life-time, he *set his affection on things above.* Which that we may all do in like manner, God of his great mercy grant, and assist us therein daily, for the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

SERMON III.

COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY.
MATTH. XXVIII. 6.

In these words, the Angel which descended from heaven at the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, invited those holy women, who came to seek for him, to look into his sepulchre, and see how the present state of things demonstrated to their senses, that he, who had been laid there three days before, was risen from the dead. On this day, the same words call upon us, and all Christians, to go along with them to the sepulchre of Christ; there to meditate on the certainty, and the wonderful manner, and the glorious power of his Resurrection. This is the use I mean to make of the words: I shall suppose, that you and I on this blessed day are going together to that garden of Joseph of Arimathea, where was a new tomb hewed in a rock, with a stone rolled to the mouth of it; the body of Jesus being buried within it, and a guard of Roman soldiers keeping watch without it; and that when we come there, we find such things as those devout women did, who came early in the morning to visit the place. With those things before us, we shall be affected nearly as they were; and, consequently, we shall be delighted and edified. There is not one circumstance attending the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which doth not carry instruction with it; and therefore I shall consider them nearly in the same order in which they happened,

and shew you the meaning and the reasons of these wonderful things. In all such events as relate to our Salvation, the Providence of God disposes the circumstances in such a manner, that they give us light and learning; and they were undoubtedly recorded for our instruction and edification.

The first circumstance attending the Resurrection of Christ may serve as a specimen, to teach what we may expect from the rest. In the first verse of the 28th chapter of St. Matthew, we are told, that the Resurrection happened as *it dawned toward the first day of the week.* St. Mark says, more expressly, that it was at the *rising of the sun.* Here then you see, as on many other occasions, the natural works of God bearing testimony to his spiritual works for the salvation of man. At the crucifixion of Christ the sun was darkened; and from the duration of the darkness for the space of three hours, we may infer that this darkness happened from an eclipse of the sun: the natural sun failing in its light, so long as the Sun of Righteousness, who is the true light of man, was suffering upon the cross. So at his resurrection, the Sun of Grace and the sun of nature rise together. From whence this inference is necessary, that he is, as he said of himself, the true light; and, that he is the author of a new life to the world, as the sun begins a new day. We learn that as nature rises with the sun, so doth the world rise with Jesus Christ, and receive life and immortality from his resurrection: and it is not improbable, but that where he is said to have *brought to light,* that is, (as the word signifies) to have *illuminated, life and immortality,* his resurrection at the rising of the sun may be referred to: for certainly his resurrection did diffuse life, as truly as the sun did then bring on the day. There-

fore every rising of the sun should remind us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we receive the benefit of every day's light, we should return thanks for the light of life and immortality, by the resurrection of our Lord. And this is the grand reason why natural things and spiritual are thus coupled together, that in the one way we may daily read the other; and that the sight of Nature may lead us to our prayers. Happy are they who make this use of it. The rising of the sun is a glorious sight; but it is only the pattern of a more excellent glory, and as such, a Christian should daily consider it.

The next observable circumstance is that of the earthquake: and here the resurrection of our Lord teaches us what we are to expect at the general resurrection of the dead; when the earth shall tremble as if it were under the pangs of delivery. That a dreadful shaking of the earth shall precede or attend the raising of the dead, is to be gathered from those other occasions, on which a resurrection was brought to pass. At the crucifixion, when Jesus expired, the earth shook, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and the bodies of saints arose. So again, when he was rising from the dead, there was *a great earthquake*. And the like had happened before in that vision of the prophet Ezekiel, when the dry bones were raised to life *. "As I prophesied," said he, "there was a noise and a shaking (the word signifies *an earthquake*) and the bones came together bone to his bone." Whether this great shaking of the earth be intended as a circumstance of solemnity and terror; or whether it be necessary, as an operative cause, toward that great effect of opening the graves, and bringing forth the dead, and restoring

* Ezek. xxxvii. 7. [compare xxxviii. 19.]

their bodies to life and motion; can be known only to God, who hath the direction of this great event: but so it will be, and we shall all feel it.

We may gather farther, that as this earthquake happened when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, to minister in the work of our Saviour's resurrection; so will the whole earth be shaken, at that moment of time, when the Son of Man shall descend in the clouds to call the dead from their graves, and to sit in judgment upon them. So the Psalmist saith, "the earth trembled when God arose to judgment."

The work of the angel of the Lord, and the effects of his appearance are wonderfully described, and in such words as are very striking to the imagination. For my own part, I feel myself tremble when I read them. He came; and with power and force more than mortal, he rolled away the massy stone from the door of the sepulchre, and then seated himself upon it in defiance; while his face shone bright as lightning, and his raiment was white as snow. If the description of this is so affecting, what must the sight have been? It was intended to confound the enemies of Jesus Christ; who were keeping watch, and supposed they could confine him in his grave by force of arms. They saw this bright messenger repair to the door of the sepulchre, to set the dead at liberty; but they dared not to interrupt him, for they were trembling and dying with fear. Such is the weakness of human force, and the folly of human wisdom, when it opposes the designs of God, and the forces of heaven. What can a sword or a spear do, when it is held up against a flash of lightning?

From the case of these keepers, all the enemies of Jesus Christ may understand what shall happen to

themselves, when he shall descend from heaven to complete the work of our redemption. They act now with confidence, while they think him sleeping, and suppose they may insult his religion with impunity: but he shall awake to avenge the cause of his word, and of his Church; and then these bold men shall be trembling and dying with fear.

In the mean while the same manifestation of divine power which confounds them, shall bring comfort and deliverance to the Church: even as the angel answered to the woman who came to seek the Lord, *fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.*

It doth not appear that the presence of the angel was attended with that dazzling brightness to them, as when he first descended, and struck terror into the guards. It seems from the relation of St. Mark, that they had entered into the sepulchre before they saw him; and there he was found as a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment. There was nothing more than this to excite their terror; but affrighted they were; not expecting such a sight. As to the guards they were gone; and St. Matthew tells us, they came to the city, as the women who went to visit the sepulchre were going out of it.

The two forms therefore under which the angel of the Lord was seen, by the guards, and by the holy women, were very different; the former was attended with power and terror and defiance; the other was as that of a gentle and peaceable messenger from heaven, sent to enlighten and comfort the friends of Jesus under their perplexity and affliction. Such are the different forms and effects of the manifestations of God to the people of this world. The enemies of

God find themselves uneasy under all his visitations, and never expect any good from him. They trust in their own power, as the Roman guards trusted in their weapons: therefore God resisteth them, and they are disappointed and confounded. They have nothing to do but to make their escape for a time, and put the best face they can upon their own miscarriages, as we shall find it happened in the present case. But to the friends of God all his visitations are attended with the information and comfort they wish for: and however they may be tried and perplexed for a time, their sorrow is turned into joy. A great sight and a great event had agitated the spirits of those holy women; but their fear had such a mixture of joy with it, that there is not one amongst us who would not be glad to feel himself in their situation.

All things shall be after the same pattern, when Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven at the last day. When he shall appear in the clouds, the most devout saint upon earth shall be amazed, and tremble inwardly at the sight; but what comfort shall he feel at the same time, when he now sees that his *Redeemer liveth*, and is come *to stand in the latter day upon the earth*. On the other hand, the wicked shall feel that the day of vengeance is come; that their own power is blasted, and that the sight which appears brings nothing to them but terror: so they can only desire to make their escape, and hide themselves from the face of their judge.

But now let us consider how the two parties who attended the sepulchre were employed. The women are called upon to see the place where the Lord lay; the guards are fled from it to their friends in the city. The women are instructed to bear the glad

tidings of the resurrection to the disciples: the soldiers are bribed to report a lie about it, to make their friends easy, and furnish an excuse to all the enemies of Jesus Christ. As the women went to tell the disciples, Jesus himself met them: and we may well suppose that the sight of him affected them as it had never done before. They were now assured that he was immortal and divine; so they fell down before him with fear and reverence, and worshipped him as their Lord and their God. But he saith unto them, *be not afraid; go tell my brethren, &c.* How comfortable is this message to us as well as to them?—*Go tell my brethren.*—For he who saith this was raised from the dead only as the *first-born of many brethren;* and with him thus raised, we are begotten to a new life, and made the sons of God. While they were delivering these blessed tidings to the Apostles, the soldiers had carried their information to the Chief Priests, and had thrown them into no small confusion. They met together immediately; but rather privately as we may suppose; and without any noise, consulted together what was best to be done. Consider first what they had heard, and then you will understand the nature of their plot better, and see farther into the wickedness of the human heart, and the cause of its most evil workings. You will see, that mistakes in religion, though lightly spoken of, as things only of a speculative concern, make people more wicked, more false, cruel and malicious in their actions, than any sensual affection.

The soldiers, it is said, shewed unto the Chief Priests *all the things that were done.* They shewed them, that while they were keeping watch, and broad awake, as guards were obliged to be at the peril of their lives, a light beyond the brightness of the sun, came upon

them all at once; and an Angel marched through them up to the sepulchre, and rolled away the stone from the mouth of it, though too weighty for any man to stir it; and that they had seen him sit down upon it when he had done, while they were unable to stir from the ground, and were terrified out of their strength, and nearly out of their senses. That the sepulchre being now open, the body of Jesus was certainly gone, while they were under this state of fear and amazement, and that he was actually risen from the dead.

Had the Chief Priests felt in their minds as you feel at the hearing of these things, they would have been pricked to the heart with the sense of their own guilt and folly; and have said—"Then is Jesus of Nazareth our true Messiah, whose doctrine we contradicted, whose person we persecuted, and put him to death at last as a malefactor and a felon! Let us turn then from our errors; let us forsake our evil ways, and pray that he will pardon our ignorance, and receive us to his favour, that we may at last partake of his salvation." Thus you would have said. But what did they say? Instead of confessing their sin, they added to all their other counsels and plots, one more, which was the last and worst of all: they hired the soldiers, who had been witnesses of his resurrection, to deny it, and to confirm the slander they had published before, that his disciples would come by night, and steal him away, and then pretend that he was risen from the dead.

I shall not stay to examine the folly and absurdity of this lie; which tells us, that soldiers were asleep, who were to be punished with death for confessing it; that they knew what was done while they were asleep: that the Disciples who had fled with fear

when their Master was condemned in the judgment hall, had turned mad all of a sudden, and exposed themselves to the arms of the Roman guards, to make the desperate attempt of stealing away the body of their master; that is, to bring death upon themselves if they should succeed, and everlasting contempt upon him and his religion: and moreover, that in the hurry of their theft, they had time to lay all the linen clothes by in an orderly manner, and to fold up the napkin that was bound about his head, as they were found by those who visited the sepulchre. These things are so obvious that it is not worth while to insist upon them. I shall therefore desire to consider what was the *cause* of this vile conduct of the Chief Priests? They had fallen into many religious notions, which were contrary to the preaching of Jesus Christ, and therefore they could not endure him or his doctrine. They would not believe him; and they could not answer him nor resist the force of his miracles. Under this state of things, there arises a battle between truth and falsehood: and when proud men fail of argument, they have nothing to depend upon but lying; and one lie produces another, till they are involved and embarrassed past all recovery. Thus it hath always been, and always will be. Mistakes in religion make men wickeder than any other principle upon earth. Religious blindness is the worst of ignorance; and religious pride is more cruel and mischievous than any other. When the mind is under religious delusion, especially such delusion as flatters the evil passions of avarice, lust, and ambition; they mistake their wickedness for godliness; and so become incapable of shame or remorse. This was the case of the Jews and the Heathens; and therefore,

in opposing the Gospel, they perpetrated more outrageous acts of falsehood, injustice, and cruelty, than men had ever done upon any other principle before.

Did the world ever hear of two such shameless lies, as those of the Jews? That Christ cast out devils by the power of Belzebub: and that when he was raised from the dead he was stolen away by his disciples? and when one wicked wretch has invented a lie, the rest of his party fall into it, and spread it abroad. Thus you find, that when one assembly had invented the lie which the soldiers were to publish, the whole body of the Jews afterwards took up the story and held to it: for the Evangelist adds, "and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews to this day." God deliver us therefore from pride, malice, and ignorance, which when united together form what we call *religious bigotry*. No falsehood can be too absurd for this bigotry to propagate; no action can be too unjust or cruel for it to perpetrate.

When we think on these things, we cannot but lament that the hearts of men are so miserably divided by false opinions. Hence we shall be led to set a greater value upon truth; which never fails to unite them. But best of all it is, to look with pity and compassion upon those who are in error, and to pray for them; that their pride may be humbled, their ignorance informed, and their hearts turned to peace and charity; for so long as we can pray for men, we shall never be angry with them, how great soever may be their errors and offences. We must expect, that some for malice, as the priests; and some for interest, as the soldiers; will go on lying to the end of the world: and the appearance of an angel from heaven would not cure them: for the more the truth is manifested, the more will some

people hate it. Disaffection is a deaf adder which hears no reason; a blind mole which sees no evidence: and obstinacy instead of being softened, is only hardened the more by the labour you bestow upon it, like iron under the hammer: which is only beaten closer into its own body. How common is it for one man to hate and rail at another, only because he has injured him. The priests and rulers of the Jews having despised and opposed our Saviour's doctrine, and finding it all confirmed by his resurrection, were brought to the tremendous dilemma, either of being converted, or of denying the resurrection: and you see which part they took. As bad people go on from bad to worse, it is wonderful to see what trouble those Jews gave themselves in running about the world, to poison the minds of men with their lying reports, and hinder the spreading of the Gospel; as if the best thing that ever came from heaven had been the worst of all! And the more it prevailed, the more were they disappointed and enraged. They preserved their influence with the Heathens against the Christians, till the time when their city was destroyed and their temple burned; and from thence they became vagabonds and slaves, contemptible to all the world.

In their conduct relating to the resurrection of Christ, one circumstance more is observable. We are frequently informed in the Gospel how covetous these Jews were, and how devoted to the world. But one bad passion is frequently overcome by another, as the wild beast will sometimes fall upon and devour his fellow, if he is the stronger and the more hungry of the two. Thus did the malice of the Jews get the better of their covetousness; for well as they loved their money, they could readily part with it

for the gratification of their malice. The elders gave *large money* to the soldiers to say as they were bid, and deny their senses. No small sum must have been requisite to quiet those men, whose minds were big, and ready to burst, with so great and terrible a secret. Covetousness is a vice which lays fast hold upon the mind, and forces men upon many unjust, and mean, and even cruel actions: but pride and malice are of more force: so they who devoured widows' houses, and could sell the children of them to make a little profit, could part with their money freely when their pride and their malice were in danger. Such contrarieties are not peculiar to Jews; the case is the same with Christians, when their passions have drawn them into a snare: they are engaged, and must go on whatever it costs.

I have now gone through the peculiar circumstances of our Saviour's resurrection. Very instructive they are when we rightly consider and apply them: therefore every Christian, at this season of the year, should visit in heart and mind the tomb of Jesus Christ, to see where he was laid, and how he was raised, and what are the consequences upon ourselves and others; that is, upon believers and unbelievers.

To make a right use of this occasion, and store our minds with such reflections as arise from it, may be of service to us through the whole year, till the season comes about to us, if it shall please God to let us see the return of it. On Good Friday we commemorate the sorrows and sufferings of Christ; his death and burial. On this day we celebrate the glory of his resurrection. In these two memorable days we find the example of the whole Christian life and character. All of it is compounded as it were of Good Friday and Easter Day; that is, of sorrow

and joy, of abasement and exaltation. With Christ, such as he was at his passion, we must expect to be opposed, and clamoured against, afflicted, persecuted, tried by the searchings of divine visitations, and bereft of all present support from heaven. With Christ, as he was on this day, we are more than conquerors, rejoicing in the possession of life, and in the hope of glory. Sometimes we are even buried, and a stone of despair is rolled to the door of our sepulchre; but God doth not leave our soul in hell, nor suffer the spiritual life that is within us to see corruption. Before this happens, his Angel is sent down to restore us to life and liberty.

This inequality, or contrariety, in the Christian character, is finely painted by the Apostle.—"We are troubled, yet not distressed: perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed—we are delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." We are, in short, a composition of death and life; of death through sin; and of life through the grace of God and the power of Christ's resurrection.

As the commemoration of Christ's sufferings and resurrection shews us the forms and changes of our present state; so according to the state we are in, our minds should be turned toward Good Friday or Easter Day. Is any under persecution or affliction? let him look to Jesus, as the wounded Israelites looked up to the serpent in the wilderness; remembering that he was lifted up, to draw unto him all that are tried, oppressed, and afflicted. Is any in joy and prosperity? let him remember in his mirth, that as there is no enjoyment of the world without health, there can be no prosperity in the soul of a Christian, but in virtue of Christ's resurrection.

Therefore when the Christians anciently gave to one another the salutation of friendship and chearfulness, it was their custom to say, "*The Lord is risen.*"

And now, lastly, you will take me right, if I venture to give you one admonition at this season, which relates more immediately to ourselves and our affairs.

You will have notice that we are to meet to-morrow morning, for the election of proper persons to serve the church and the parish. Give me leave, my brethren, to remind you, that this congregation was unanimous last year; and that we have enjoyed many comforts and blessings in consequence of it ever since. Your church is in a flourishing state: the duties of divine worship are regularly performed: the children of the poor are instructed; not a few of them are clothed: and many of them are greatly improved. Your minister can do little without your kind encouragement and assistance: but with it, he may do much: and your church, which is now a praise in the neighbourhood, may possibly become an example to a considerable part of this kingdom. It is therefore your duty, as members of the church, to act for the good of the church; as citizens and subjects, to act for the preservation of peace; as Christians to act for the praise and glory of God; and, as Englishmen, to act for the security of your own religious rights and liberties; without listening to, and without fearing, any persons, who may feel themselves inclined to deprive you of them.

Follow then your own happiness with wisdom and resolution; but not without that spirit of peace and brotherly love, which will always be attended with the blessing of God.

SERMON IV.

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM. REV. XIV. 13.

DISCOURSES at funerals were formerly more common than at present. It is to be lamented they have been so much out of use; because they were intended as much for the edification of the living as the commemoration of the dead. What is then delivered falls into the hearts of the hearers, while they are struck with a solemn scene, and softened by the subject of death, in which they are all so nearly concerned. *O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end.*

On such an occasion as this, death is set before their eyes, and they cannot avoid the consideration of it. While that thought is upon them, all men are wise, and then it is our time to speak to them.

I shall therefore make use of the present opportunity to give you some necessary instruction concerning the nature of death: after which, it will be expected that I should say something of the good example we have now before us.

The text saith, *blessed are the dead:* which words, if taken by themselves, are not true. Death, to man in that state wherein the fall hath left him, is not a blessing but a curse. It is the wages of sin; and as

such, it is not an accident of nature, but a punishment. Therefore the progress of man's life is like the journey of a criminal from the gaol to the place of execution. As things are now, life is the road to death; therefore God taught his servants to use it as such, and live only as *pilgrims and strangers upon earth.*

The death of man being a death in sin, it was accounted unclean; and thence it was ordained, that they who had touched a dead body, should afterwards be washed and purified with water; which, in the moral sense, was a lesson to the people to abstain from such *dead works,* as are contrary to a life of purity, such as is required in the servants of God.

Death is also a disgrace: for no man can suffer as a malefactor without shame. To be numbered with transgressors, and die by the hand of justice, hath always been accounted infamous: and such is now the death inflicted upon fallen man by the justice of God.

All these things are true of death considered in itself; but to a Christian it is another thing. *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.* In the first chapter of the Revelation, Jesus Christ appears to the Evangelist as a conqueror over death, and saith—*Fear not—I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death. Henceforth,* from this appearance and this declaration, we are to date the blessedness of the dead. Jesus Christ hath changed the nature of death by partaking of it for our sakes. In consequence of which, our death is no longer a punishment for sin, but a sacrifice, with a *benediction* upon it, like that commemorative sacrifice of his own body, which he brake and blessed. Thus our death

is no longer to be abhorred as sinful and unclean, but as attended, like the holy death of Christ, with myrrh, aloes, and frankincense; to signify our acceptance with God, and our preservation to immortality, when the corruptible shall put on incorruption.

The shame and disgrace of our death is removed from us by that shame which Christ endured upon the cross. He suffered such a death as the law of Moses pronounced to be *cursed* in its kind, that our death might be *blessed*.

But now we are to remember, this change takes place on those only who *die in the Lord;* that is, on those who are in the Lord at their death. By which it is to be understood, that they die members of his mystical body, the Church, by baptism: which consideration assures us, that infants, so made members of him, are *in the Lord;* and if they die, they die in the Lord: their death is blessed, and they enter into rest; as the new-born children of the Hebrews passed over Jordan into the promised land, without undergoing the trials of the wilderness. If they grow up to years of discretion, they must live in the other ordinances of God; they must *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;* they must live in private devotion, and in the public worship of the congregation. They must lead the life of *soldiers* under the captain of their salvation; as the Hebrews fought under Joshua against the enemies of God, before they could obtain a peaceable settlement in the land of Canaan.

If thus prepared, there is *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* For if any man is really in Christ, he is a new creature: he leads a new life, and that ends in a new death: the blessedness of which, according to the text, consists in these two particu-

lars; first, that they, who die in this state of renovation, *rest from their labours;* and secondly, that *their works do follow them.*

The labours of life, and the rest of death, were signified to us from the beginning of the world: for God worked upon the six days of the creation, and then rested upon the seventh; giving us a promise and a pattern, that if we labour with him, we shall rest with him. No rest was necessary to him; for the holy one of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth: a world cometh forth into being, and is arranged into order and perfection at his word. He rested therefore for our instruction: to teach us, that the labour of this life, if it is for good, like that of God, will certainly end in the rest of heaven. And we learn farther, by plain inference from this example, that there can be no rest for man, properly so called, till the *works* of this life are *done* and over.

There is a passage, wonderfully beautiful and instructive, on this subject, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—*He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* In which the Apostle means, that the Christian who is departed, and hath ceased from the works of life, and not till then, enters into a state of rest; which is not a mere cessation from labour, but a rest which is *blessed* and *sanctified,* and which is also heavenly and eternal, because it is called the rest of God—"if they shall enter," saith he, "into *my rest.*"

Hence again, we have another sure inference, that there will be no rest for those who do not labour: *the sleep of a labouring man is sweet*: he that will rest with God must work with God. The idle and the unprofitable have their rest here (such as it is) and their trouble is to come after. Lazarus is carried by

the angels to his repose, in what is called the bosom of Abraham; and they fall into a place of torment, where their eyes are at last *open* (they were shut all their life-time) only to discover that their condition is miserable and hopeless. Instead of having angels ready to receive them at their death, they fall into the company and custody of those, to whose advice and direction they committed themselves in their life-time, without seeing their guides; but now they see their keepers.

The true rest not only presupposes labour, but that this labour is of the right sort. *They rest from* their *labours,* saith the text; that is, from such labours as Christian men, who live and die in the Lord, are engaged in and exercised with. Wicked men have their labours; and the devil himself is always at work. Few men are more zealous and active than they who have ends of sin or mischief to promote. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that many of the works of vice are very laborious and distressing to those who are occupied therein. But such labour doth not lead men to rest; it keeps them for life under the torment and disappointment of their passions; which trouble them perpetually, as winds and tides give an unceasing motion to the sea. And it is too commonly followed by an hopeless death. The pains which tear them from the body are but the beginning of their sorrows.

The labours intended in the text, are the labours of good men; and we are to enquire more particularly into the nature of them, because it is added, *their works do follow them.* The works of their life are not forgotten; an account is taken of them all: they are noted in God's book. Their works follow with the fruits of them, and they shall reap as they have

sowed. None of their labours shall be in vain in the Lord; but all shall be repaid in their kind; as the husbandman who hath sowed wheat receives a crop of the same grain, and that with an abundant increase.

For their labours of mercy, they shall find mercy, even the forgiveness of their sins, in that great day, when all shall stand in need of it.

What they gave in faith to the poor brethren of Christ on earth, shall be repaid in treasure from the stores of heaven.

What they gave up in this world, through an uncoveting poverty of spirit, they shall possess in the kingdom of God. What they gave up was temporal; what they shall receive will be eternal.

If they delighted in peace, and laboured to promote it, they shall be reckoned among the children of God; and be heirs together with Jesus Christ, who came to make peace between heaven and earth.

By enduring persecution for righteousness sake, they shall be received as friends by the blessed company of heaven. Angels will welcome into their society those whom wicked and envious men defamed, as if they were not worthy to live; when in fact, the world was not worthy of them.

For these and other of their labours, great shall be their reward in heaven; they shall be numbered with prophets, martyrs, and saints, in glory everlasting.

The admonition arising from all this doctrine is expressed for us in few words by the Apostle—*let us labour, therefore, to enter into that Rest;* the plain interpretation is, let us *study* to enter into that Rest; which none will find, but they who make it their study to obtain it: labouring with this assurance, that as certainly as the six days of work are followed by

the Sabbath, so surely will the labours of faith be followed by that *Sabbatism* (that *State of Rest* signified by the Sabbath) which remaineth for the people of God. And as you see that all men have not a share in the Sabbath here, but either neglect the use, or despise the blessings of it; so it will be hereafter. Many are following their own vain pleasures on the Lord's day; many are absent from the church; and some sotting away their time in public houses; many are drudging at the accounts of their worldly occupations, rather preferring incessant labour for themselves, and the poor unfortunate beasts that serve them, than partaking thankfully of that holy relaxation which God hath given them in great goodness, for the ease of their bodies, and the edification of their minds. Such poor mistaken souls were found among the Israelites, who were led out of Egypt by Moses: they had no taste for that Rest which was before them, but *thought scorn of the pleasant land,* and lusted after the ways of Egypt; where they had been in bondage, under that idle people, who kept them constantly to hard labour. Yet thither did those besotted people wish to go again, rather than follow God into a land of liberty. So they fell short in the wilderness, and never saw the blessings of Canaan. Their example is followed by thousands of perverse people, who are enemies to themselves, and lust after their own misery: leading a life of more labour and sorrow than God ever imposed upon any of *his* servants, and finding no rest in death. Their example is proposed to *us*, that we may *not* follow it. Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, that we may not *fall after the same example of unbelief:* then shall we rest from our labours, and our works will follow us.

Your minds will now be naturally asking the question, how far the things which have been spoken are applicable to the present occasion? You will expect I should make that application: and I should be unkind to you, and unjust to the departed, if I were to avoid it.

To speak of those who are gone, is often dangerous; because, perhaps, we cannot speak well, and humanity and decency forbid us to speak ill. To say the truth, I verily believe, it is partly owing to the decay of Christian piety, and the increasing corruption of the times, that funeral sermons are gone so much out of fashion: because so few are now found who are fit for them. However, we are under no difficulties of that kind in the instance now before us: had I thought so, I should by no means have made it my own choice, as I have done, to appear in the pulpit on this occasion.

Of our dear sister here departed, nothing can be said but what is good, and may edify the hearers. Such indeed was her own meekness and lowliness of mind, that she would have taken all praise for flattery; and I dare not have spoken it: but we may speak now without offence. How many useful, humble, exemplary characters there are in private life, who are never spoken of in public, to the end that their virtues may be applauded and imitated: who pass off the stage of life unknown and unnoticed; like the flowers which blow in a pathless wilderness, and fall to the ground in secret!

Nothing was more distinguishable in her character, than that persevering quietness and mildness of spirit, which seemed never to have been moved to speak evil of any one. What a peaceable, and what a happy world would this be, if all were of that mind!

It is very remarkable, that one of the last good offices of her life, was an affectionate attempt to restore the disturbed mind of a neighbour to the comforts of peace and reconciliation. By which we may judge, that, among her other good gifts, she would have bequeathed to us all, if it had been in her power, that blessed spirit of peace which regulated and adorned her own life. If she could have done this, I hope there are none here present who would not have been ready to receive it and cultivate it; because it would make *them* happy, as it did *her*, and bring them nearer to that kingdom of peace, to which she is translated.

Her patience, under a long and afflicting state of infirmity, was wonderful to those who were witnesses of it: and you all know, how she resisted it, and struggled with it, that she might appear in this place, and join with the congregation in the praise and worship of God; never giving it up, 'till within a very short time of her death.

Of her charity to the poor, I may tell *you*, but I need not tell *them*, they have felt it, and will continue to feel it; for her hand is stretched out to them still.

Her zeal to the Church of England will always be acknowledged, from the provision she has made for the better accommodation of a minister to serve the church in this place: which, though not wanted at present, may be of much future benefit, and prevent this church and parish from being neglected hereafter, as they have been in time past. If they who have robbed, destroyed, and profaned churches, have been visited by the just judgment of God, whereof we have notorious instances in the history of this country, they who contribute to their support, may justly ex-

pect to be blessed in themselves, and in those who succeed to their possessions. The church therefore, which owes so much to her, ought at least to pay the present debt of respect and gratitude to her memory; and it would scarcely have been decent in me to have omitted it. This is all *we* have in our power: what is more substantial, must be left to that great God, whose honour and worship she was so studious to promote.

It is not the least of her praise, that she disposed all her affairs with the utmost prudence and impartiality. You may think this a matter beneath our notice: but prudence is the mother of many and great virtues; and it was such in her; indeed it seems to have been the leading part of her character.

We may then, I trust, say with assurance, that she is of the number of those, who *die in the Lord,* and whose *works do follow them.*

What she is now, we must all be; and God only knows how soon the strongest and the boldest amongst us may become such. But if we wish to be what she shall be hereafter; if we would die with her expectations, we must follow the example of her meekness, and patience, and charity. If we would die the death of the righteous, we must lead the life of the righteous; there is no other way: *Be ye* then *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

SERMON V.

AND THEY CAME OVER UNTO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA, INTO THE COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES. —AND WHEN HE WAS COME OUT OF THE SHIP, IMMEDIATELY THERE MET HIM OUT OF THE TOMBS A MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT. MARK V. 1, 2.

THE miracles of our Saviour are commonly understood, as acts of divine power, which were intended to shew, that he was the Son of God and the King of Israel. All his miracles were undoubtedly so many testimonies that he was sent from God: but they were much more than this; for they were all of such a *kind*, and attended with such *circumstances*, as gave us an insight into the spiritual state of man, and the great work of his salvation.

In this miraculous account of the man with the unclean spirit in the country of the Gadarenes, we behold, on the one side, a work of the Devil, and on the other, a contrary work of Jesus Christ, who came *to destroy the works of the Devil.* From the example of this poor wretch, in his state of possession, we see plainly what it is to be *under the power of Satan.* Such as this man was, such would he make of every man that is born into the world, if he were permitted of God so to do; he would make him restless, and shameless, and senseless, and furious. This poor Gadarene fled from the society of men, and had his dwelling in nakedness among the tombs and mountains; places which suited with the melancholy state

of his mind. When he was bound with chains, they were broken in sunder; nothing could tame him: night and day he was *crying and cutting himself with stones*.

In all this we have an example of the power of Satan upon the hearts of men: his works are always the same in kind, though their effects do not always appear in the same form. He works by sin just as effectually as by the in-dwelling of a legion: for sin, where it gets possession, bereaves men of their wits; it is inconsistent with the rational enjoyment of life; and leads to melancholy and misery in some, in others to revellings and ravings, by night and by day: none of the obligations which bind good men to their duty have an effect upon it; it breaks through them all. Consider, whether the determined idle sot is not a *madman* to all intents and purposes: he has no sense of his duty toward his wife and children: natural affection hath no hold upon him, though it can bind a brute beast: his fortune, his health, his soul are of no account with him; there he sits raving and destroying himself; an enemy to his own flesh; like the poor possessed man, who cut himself with stones, till his head was broken, and he was of consequence a ghastly spectacle, covered with his own blood; as the drunkard, in his ravings, is frequently seen to be.

When a man is come to this pass, what can be done with him? Will you offer him reasons? He hears none; for he has no reason in himself which you can lay hold of or apply to. Nothing but the power of Jesus Christ, nothing but a miracle of grace, can bring such an one to his right mind. But how is Jesus Christ looked upon by men when they are in this miserable state? Just as he was regarded by the

legion of Devils; that is, not as a *Saviour* but as a *Tormentor*. He and his religion are desired to keep at a distance, and not give them any interruption under this misery of sin; for, in their judgment, to be *reformed* and *pacified*, is to be *tormented*.

It is here to be remarked, that this man in the gospel was possessed by a multitude of evil spirits, who called themselves *Legion*. How this could be, it is in vain for us to ask; because, while we are in the body, we know so little about the world of spirits; but, in the moral application, the sense is very plain; for if sin is, in every man, what the Devil is in a dæmoniac; then, it is evident the same man may be under the dominion of a legion of vices and evil passions at once. Pride, covetousness, deceit, lying, lust, drunkenness and blasphemy, are often found in one single person. Such is the case of miserable man! but, lost as he may seem to be, the Saviour can find him, and cast out all that sin which has got the dominion over him; as he sent out this *Legion* of spirits into the herd of swine.

When the Devil leaves a man, he does not fall into idleness; he goes upon some other mischief as fast as he can, that no time may be lost. So, the evil spirits being cast out of this Gadarene, entered into a herd of swine, and drove them all headlong down a steep place into the sea, where they were drowned. Here observe, that the Devil, with all his malice, can do nothing against man or beast but by permission of God: he has no power over a poor worthless swine, that wallows in the mire, till he obtains leave to exercise it. The Legion, therefore, knowing what terms they were upon, apply to Jesus for this permission; *Send us*, said they, *into the swine that we may enter into them; and forthwith Jesus gave them leave*. Hence we

gather, that, in the like case, the like leave will be granted. Suffer us, said they, to enter, not into *oxen*, not into *sheep*, not into sober and orderly cattle, but into the greedy, filthy, rebellious *swine*. There the Devils had permission to *work*, as they are said still to do, *in the children of disobedience*. Who are the people that are delivered up by the best judgment of God to the will of the Devil? Who, but the unclean and abominable; which resemble swine in their lives and manners? The glutton, the drunkard, the adulterer, the fornicator, the idle and the disobedient, open a way for the devil to enter in, and possess them with other evil passions of wrath, malice, revenge, covetousness, which bring them under the severity of the laws, and so they go headlong to destruction. With good men, who lead sober and temperate lives, like the labouring ox or the innocent sheep, you find meekness, quietness, and charity; and where will you find wrath, and revenge, and clamour, and evil speaking, so much as with those who live in habitual intemperance? For bodily excess produces turbulence and furiousness of mind. When an evil spirit was to be cast out, and the disciples of Christ had failed in it, he told them, *that kind went not forth*, which means, that evil spirits of that sort could not be cast out, *but by prayer and fasting*. Therefore if prayer and fasting send away evil spirits, indevotion and intemperance will let them in. Look well then to yourselves: the devil desires nothing so much as to destroy you, and is ever upon the watch; he will miss no opportunity; as soon as he sees you live like a swine, he will ask leave to take possession of you, and that leave will not be refused. And what will he do with you? he will lead you farther off from God: he will hurry you away from the sins of the body into

blindness of heart, so that you shall not foresee the necessary consequences of your own evil actions: he will bring you nearer and nearer to some steep place; and when you are at it, down you must go without stopping: it is an headlong course, and the sea of perdition is at the bottom. How careful ought we then to be in guarding against the beginnings of sin! Who knows how far he shall go, when he begins with the indulgence of any *one* sinful lust? how many have began with keeping ill company; and ended with self-murder, or the gallows? *You* intend no more than the *beginning;* but the devil intends the *utmost* mischief that sin can do to you. He works with a view to that *end,* which you do not see: and he will take care, that you shall not see it, till it cannot be avoided; as, when the swine had started from the top of the precipice, they could not stop till they ran into the sea which lay at the bottom.

Now when all these things were done, the keepers of the swine flee to the city, and relate every thing as it had happened: at the hearing of which, the people *went out to see what it was that was done.* Here they find the man that was possessed with the Devil, *sitting and clothed, and in his right mind.* He that was used to run raving about, was now *sitting* calm and quiet: he that had torn his clothes off his back, and was past all sense of shame, was now clothed and decent in his appearance: he that had been out of his wit, and spake and cried as Devils gave him utterance, was now in his *right mind,* and could give a rational account of all that had happened to him. What a wonderful change is here! How gracious is the power that can produce such a blessed transformation! that can raise up a child of God out of a child of wrath, and an instrument of the devil! How

will the people of the city rejoice when they see this! will they not wish that such a guest would remain with them for ever, to relieve their sicknesses and sins? So you would think: but, alas, when you come to know a little better what the humour of this world is, and what low motives men are governed by, you will find the contrary: you will discover, to your surprise and sorrow, that men will put away from them all the blessings of salvation, for the sordid ends and interests of this world. So did these Gadarenes. Instead of being delighted and cheered with this wonderful act of divine grace, in the restoration of their miserable neighbour, they were uneasy and affrighted at it. Instead of wishing for more good of the kind, these stupid people considered nothing but the hogs which they had lost, and were afraid the Saviour of the world should do them some more mischief. Good God! what infatuation is this! But it does not end here: these are not the only people, in whom this folly is found: the world is full of such Gadarenes: you find them every where: men, who pray Jesus Christ to depart out of their coasts, for fear he should send away their vile lusts and passions to the devil. It appears incredible, that any people should be so wicked and so false to themselves as to prefer the possession of their swine to the company of Jesus Christ. What! is our property in a filthy beast more desirable than the presence of the Son of God; who can deliver us from our passions, and restore us to our senses? It certainly is so, to all those who make this world their object; present pleasure or present profit doth so blind their eyes, that they can see nothing wonderful in the power of Christ, nor feel any desire that it should be exercised for their own salvation: they are rather busy in cal-

culating, how much they shall be likely to *lose* if he comes against them. One says within himself, I must part with what I have gotten by fraud and injustice; he will order me to refund and make restitution; or to give of what I have to the poor, or to the church. Another reckons I shall be obliged to give up my adultery; he will cast that devil out as soon as he comes to me. Another says, I must eat and drink less, and I will not deny myself for any body; I see no occasion for it; and if that be his doctrine, I had rather be without him than with him. I came into the world to enjoy myself as much as I can; and I will continue so to do, as long as my vessels will hold together. The woman of the world says, I must part with my vanity; and instead of doing as every body does (whom one *knows*) I must do as nobody does; and be thought ridiculous and hypocritical; in short, I had rather be under the devil and in the fashion, than under Jesus Christ and out of it. People do not talk aloud in this manner, as I do for them; few are so shameless as to do that; but thus they reason in their hearts; and thus they have determined, as you may see by their lives.

Too many reservations in behalf of self-indulgence are found in many, who are otherwise well disposed. Let every one make the experiment upon himself, and ask impartially—did I never wish, that Christian godliness, with all its restraints might *depart out of my coasts*, for the sake of preserving some favourite lust: or indulging some favourite passion? Did I never, in my thoughts, take part against the authority of God, and wish there was no such thing, for love to some particular sin? Whoever discovers any such reasonings, and such inclinations within him,

may wonder at the case of the senseless Gadarenes; but he will find their history too probable, from what passes in his own mind. But to proceed:

Every good man, who has the glory of God and the interest of his religion at heart, may learn from this example of Jesus Christ, what he himself is to expect under the like circumstance. The servant is not above his Lord. If the Gadarenes out of respect to their swine, desired *Him* to depart out of their coasts; they that are Gadarenes in their hearts will shew as little regard to his ministers. Instead of being held in greater esteem for the good they do, or wish to do; their company will be less desirable on that very account. In every place there are those, who, for some swinish reason or other, will think they have an interest against a preacher of the Gospel, if he is active in his ministry, and speaks the truth, and exercises what power he has, for the salvation of men.

But it is time now to have done with these bad people; as I hope there are not many such among those I am speaking to; so, let us proceed to a more pleasant and profitable part of our subject.

When Jesus had heard the request of these Gadarenes, he made no remarks upon it, but took them at their word, and left them. The wretched *Pharaoh*, to his own loss, commanded *Moses to see his face no more;* and Moses left him with these words, "thou "hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no "more." And when Moses was gone, grace and mercy went with him: Pharaoh's opportunity was lost; and his destruction soon followed: for, it is just, that they who put away salvation from themselves, with contempt towards those who offer it, should perish in the hardness of their own hearts. What be-

came of these Gadarenes afterwards, we do not read: but surely no good could possibly happen to those, who through favour to an *herd of swine* judged themselves *unworthy of everlasting life*. To this judgment of their own our Saviour left them, and went into a ship. But he that had been possessed with the Devil, and was now well, prayed him that he might be with him. He was delighted with the company of his deliverer, and wished never to leave him any more. He had tasted and found that the Lord was gracious. He compared his past miserable condition, with the light and comfort to which he was now restored; and rightly judged, that his future health and happiness must depend upon his following and cleaving to the person of his spiritual physician. We may suppose the man would address him in some such words as these: "Lord, "how shall I depart from thee, without whom I am "nothing? I was in blindness and madness; I was "in restlessness and misery, and thou hast restored "me to peace and comfort: I was the bond-slave of "Satan, and thou hast brought me to the liberty of "the sons of God: let me never leave thee nor for-"sake thee: now I have recovered the use of "my senses, and can understand thy teaching, let "me from henceforth sit at thy feet and hear thy "word."

And will not this be the case with all those, on whom the power of Jesus Christ hath taken effect? Will they not desire still to follow him, and be with him? And with him they may be, as truly as that man could be with him while he was conversant upon earth. For he hath promised to be *with us alway even unto the end of the world:* if so; if he is still with us, it follows, that we may be with him. Should we ask, how this may be; the answer is plain: the pro-

mise of Christ was made to his disciples; that is, to his Church; they therefore, who would find him, must seek him in his Church; where his word is preached, and his sacraments are administered. He is with us by his spirit; according to his promise; *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.* If any one delights in the study of the Gospel; is attentive to public worship; is constant at the communion; regular in his private devotions; and in charity with his neighbours; that man is undoubtedly in the company of Jesus Christ every day of his life; and he may use those words of the Apostle; *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword**? Distress and persecution were from the beginning the lot of those who chose to be with Jesus Christ; and, in some degree, it must be so now; and will be, to the end of the world; but they who are sensible of what they have received from him, will not be *separated from him* for any of these considerations. In all these things, they will be *more than conquerors through him that loved them.*

So far this man in the gospel is a lesson to us; that we should find a delight in the society of our blessed Redeemer, and wish to be ever with him. Gratitude is a pleasing service, and devout meditation may captivate our minds, so as to make us forget what we owe to the public. *So* our Saviour himself was pleased to think, upon this occasion; therefore he did not suffer the man whom he had restored to remain in his company, but gave him a charge, to employ himself in another manner; *go home,* said he, *to thy friends, and*

* Rom. viii. 35.

tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. In this, he teaches us what we also are to do; who, in all the good that happens to us, are to be mindful of others, as well as of ourselves. A person cured of some grievous distemper, by some powerful medicine, gives notice to the public, that others, under the same malady, may find the same relief. The man whom Jesus had cured was ordered to take this course: *he published in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel.* He told his neighbours, what he *had* been, and what he *now* was, by the divine blessing. All the circumstances of the Legion of Devils, and the possession and destruction of the herd of swine, were undoubtedly recounted by him to the astonishment of the hearers; and for what end? Not to gratify the ambition of his deliverer, but that others might be encouraged to come to him; for he who had saved this one sinner, is the Saviour of all mankind.

And now, my brethren, you see your own duty, and the design of this whole narrative. It is related in the gospel, for the same reason as it was published in Decapolis; that all sinners may know *where to go* for that saving health, which is to restore their minds to quietness and comfort. For all the diseases of the spirit, which are a thousand times worse than the troubles of the world, or the distempers of the body, there is no cure, but from him who was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil; whose worst work is the deprivation of the human mind by the power of indwelling sin, which drives men to all those extravagances which render this world such a miserable place as we find it. The passions of men are like

storms and tempests which disturb the elements, destroy the fruits of the earth, and send the poor distressed mariner to the bottom of the sea. Such are the effects of those vices, which the evil spirit infuses into the hearts of men; their lives are rendered vain and miserable, and their souls are shipwrecked.

Compare the *two states* of the man, whose case we have been considering: think what he was, when he was wandering among the tombs and mountains; and afterwards, when he was sitting quiet in his right mind with Jesus Christ. Compare these together, and consider, *which* you would chuse; for you have the one or the other, as you think proper. The same difference, which you see in this man, is to be found in different people at this day; and which do you think are the happier? A company of drunkards and profligates, who are raving and swearing, and quarrelling and blaspheming over their liquor; or a society of Christians, singing Psalms and hearing the word of God? The former sort can never expect their happiness from such a way of life, till the Devil is in them; and when he has got possession of them, nothing is to be wondered at. But the sober and the godly have the advantage of them every way, both in this world and the world to come: for *here*, they are *with* Jesus Christ and in their *right mind;* and when the others shall exchange their false mirth (which is now no better than madness) for weeping and wailing and gnashing of the teeth; when *they* shall lose their lusts and their Saviour besides, who will not remain *in their coasts;* they who have been cured of their sins and miseries in this mortal state, shall no more be separated from him; they shall be *ever with the Lord;* publishing his praises to saints

and angels, in such terms as the Holy Spirit hath already suggested to us—*O give thanks unto the Lord for he is gracious, and his mercy endureth for ever:* let them give *thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy.* Psalm cvii. 1, 2.

SERMON VI.

THE SAME NIGHT PETER WAS SLEEPING BETWEEN TWO SOLDIERS, BOUND WITH TWO CHAINS; AND THE KEEPERS BEFORE THE DOOR KEPT THE PRISON.

AND BEHOLD, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAME UPON HIM, AND A LIGHT SHINED IN THE PRISON; AND HE SMOTE PETER ON THE SIDE, AND RAISED HIM UP, SAYING, ARISE UP QUICKLY. AND HIS CHAINS FELL OFF FROM HIS HANDS. ACTS xii. 6, 7.

THE mind of man is formed for thought and meditation; and the pleasure of the understanding, where it has proper matter to exercise and amuse it, is far preferable to the indulgence of the passions. Happy should we be, if we could always think so!

The best matter in the world for meditation is that of the holy Scripture; first, because it is selected for us by the wisdom that made the world. The thoughts which men suggest to us in their conversation or their writings, have too frequently their beginning and their ending in this world; and are either imaginary and false, or earthly and unprofitable: and the meditation arising from such matter, how finely and elegantly soever it may be, will at last be slender and useless as the web which the spider draws from its own bowels. Secondly, because the matter of the Scripture not only affords a more rational amusement to the mind in this life, but is always of service to help it forward to the enjoyment of a better. It nourishes

the spirit, while it engages the imagination. The body, be it never so well supported, must sink and perish at last; but the soul that is *nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine,* shall never die.

Among the great variety of subjects treated of in the Scripture, none are more profitable than the *miracles* it has recorded; which generally are capable of a two-fold application. They serve as so many evident acts of a divine power, to confirm some doctrines revealed to us from heaven: and they are likewise in themselves so many contrivances of divine wisdom, to figure out and represent to us the doctrines they are intended to establish. A miracle is a seal of some divine truth; but if the seal bears the image and superscription of the truth, it will have a double value.

This is generally true in the miracles in the Old Testament; but of those of the New in a more particular manner; which after they have confirmed the words of the gospel, preach the *sense* of it over again to us, as *signs* or *figures* of it. You will understand what I mean from an example or two. Our blessed Saviour, as a proof of his divine mission, cleansed a leper; not merely for the healing of the body, which was but a temporary consideration; but to shew, by the choice of the miracle, that it was he who should take away the sin of the world, and cleanse the soul from so loathsome and infectious a distemper: for sin, like the leprosy, is hereditary to man. When he opened the eyes of a blind man, he added to the miracle this interpretation, to shew the meaning of it—*I am the light of the world*—As if he had said, I who now give sight to the eyes of the body, do this to signify, that I myself am the true light to the eyes of the understanding: as the eyes that were blind are

restored to sight, so shall the mind that is dark and ignorant be made *wise to salvation*, and recover the use of those faculties, which sin had extinguished: *he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

Thus in like manner, when he set open the doors of a prison by the ministry of an angel, which is the miracle related in the text, what did he, but shadow out to us thereby that great and glorious effect of his own incarnation upon all believers, that *eternal redemption*, which the prophet long ago described as *an opening of the prison to them that are bound?* Isa. lxi. 1.

But before I proceed to particulars, I must take the liberty which St. *Paul* took with King *Agrippa:* he put this question to him, "King Agrippa, believest "thou the prophets?" I must put a like question to those that hear me, and say, believest thou that a state of *sin* is a state of *imprisonment;* and that the *service of God*, to which the gospel hath called thee, is *perfect freedom?* If not, all the moral reflections I can suggest to you upon this deliverance of St. *Peter* out of prison, will make but little impression, and be very imperfectly understood. I will therefore presume, as the Apostle did, and answer the question for myself —"*I know that thou believest:*" and may God give you his grace, that what I am now going to offer upon the *mystery of God manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of* the Devil, may fall into the ground of an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit an hundred fold. With this desire I shall endeavour to shew, that the miraculous deliverance of St. Peter out of prison, is not a matter *of private interpretation*, which looks no further than to the apostle himself; but is intended for public use; holding forth to the Church, and to every individual member of it, an in-

structive pattern of his own natural bondage, and his miraculous redemption out of it.

The condition of an unenlightened unconverted sinner was never painted in more lively colours, than in the first verse of the text, which describes the situation of the apostle. "The same *night* Peter was "*sleeping* between two soldiers, bound with *two chains*, "and the keepers before the door *kept the prison*." You observe, first, that all this happened in the *night*: secondly, that Peter was *sleeping*: thirdly, that he was *bound*, and that with *two chains*; and fourthly, that there were *keepers* before the door who *kept the prison*. Every word of which is verified in that man, who is not yet brought to the gospel of the grace of God. For first, it is night with him. His mind is without the knowledge of God, and of immortality; and Nature can give him no information about either of them: so that he may be truly said to *sit in darkness*, even the worst of all darkness, which is that of the understanding. The apostle therefore, speaking to enlightened Christians, reminds them of that state, *out of which* they had been called: "Ye brethren, says he, are not in darkness, "that that day should overtake you as a thief (in the "night): ye are all the children of *light*, and the "children of *the day*: we are not of the *night nor of* "*darkness*."

As the night is a time of darkness, it is also a time of sleep: "Peter was sleeping." When man is in the darkness of nature, he is like a person in a deep sleep; insensible of every thing real that is round about him, and, under the delusion of a dream, he sees nothing of his true situation, but is amused with all those shadows, which variously please and torment the short miserable lives of men. "Let us not *sleep*, saith "St. Paul, as do others." We Christians are awake:

the world is asleep, and lies dreaming of happinesss under all the real circumstances of misery. For they are not only asleep, they are under the custody of him that hath the power of death, and cannot rise up if they would. They are under close confinement in the worst of prisons, and are *bound with two chains*, the one of *sin*, the other of *death*, neither of which can be broken by the strength of man; and as for any succour, it is kept at a distance, by a guard of *keepers* before the prison door: there sits the *strong man armed*, to watch his captives, and prevent their rescue or their escape. There they must remain, *fast bound in misery and iron, till a stronger than he comes upon him*, takes from him his armour wherein he trusteth, and sets his prisoners at liberty.

Now we have seen the misery of man, we are next to behold the wonderful work of his deliverance by the manifestation of his Redeemer: for it follows in the text—*and behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison.* The first appearance of our great Deliverer was attended with the same circumstance. When the glad tidings of his birth were revealed to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, *the glory of* the Lord shone round about them. At this dark season of the year, he left the throne of his glory, and for us men and for our salvation, entered into the dungeon of this sinful world, where his first act was to give *light* to it: from the hour of his birth, a light began to shine in this prison. A star, appearing in the East, pointed him out as the *light* that was to *lighten the Gentiles*, and to be the *Glory of his people Israel.* Soon after his conception of the Blessed Virgin, the tongue of Zachary was loosed, to declare, that through the tender mercy of our God, the *Day spring from on high* had *visited us*, to

give *light to them that sat in darkness;* which words do very exactly describe the posture and circumstances of men in a prison. Worse than the midnight darkness of a dungeon, was the blindness of the Jews, and the ignorance of the heathens. According to the strictest sense of these words of the prophet, *darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, when the Lord arose, and his glory was seen upon them.* Under the ministry of Christ himself, the Jews received the light of knowledge; and by the preaching of his apostles, this light of instruction was spread abroad from Mount Sion into all the quarters of the earth; till the light of the gospel became as universal as the light of the sun, which visits every side of the globe, and *nothing is hid from the heat thereof.*

The consequence of this *light,* is *liberty;* and thus it follows in the history of our apostle's deliverance: "he *smote* Peter on the *side,* and raised him up, saying, *arise up quickly.*" Thus must every believer be smitten, before the great work of his redemption can succeed. The gospel doth not address itself to the head and to the wit: it strikes at the heart and the affections. If the soul is insensible of the stroke, and will not be convinced of its misery, the wretched prisoner *sleeps on and takes his rest:* he is either in love with the sordid life of a dungeon, or lies dreaming that he is in a palace. The heavenly light shines round about him; but his eyes are not open to make any use of it: he *loves his darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.* Oh, what a heart must that be, which neither feels the stroke, nor hears the voice of the heavenly messenger, who is sent for its deliverance! But happy is the broken and the contrite heart, which feels its own misery, and answers to the call of heaven: blessed are the eyes, which

awake, to see and rejoice in the glory of that light, which truth diffuses round about them! The prisoner, who has this sense of things, rises and stands upright, as Peter did when the Angel had smote him: he hears the voice which speaketh to him by the prophet, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection from sin to grace: over him the second death shall have no power.

The words which the Angel used to St. Peter, will admit of an useful application to us all: "arise up "quickly:" for if our salvation is *an escape,* no time is to be lost: life and death may depend upon the present moment; and he who hears not the first call, may hear the last trumpet as the second, when the hour of deliverance, and the day of grace, is over. If reformation is put off to a *convenient season,* that season, as we are taught by woeful experience, never comes. And where must the blame be laid? God is not obliged to wait the idle man's leisure: he will be justified, and the sinner will be lost. If Peter had desired the Angel to wait while his sleep was out, he had been left to the consequences of his imprisonment; and would soon have been carried out to gratify the malicious Jews with the spectacle of his execution. You think he would have acted like a madman, if he had neglected to rise up and follow the Angel immediately: and do not you think, that any man would be mad in the like circumstances? He would certainly: but thou, whosoever thou art, that delayest to obey the call of God's messenger, and forsake thy sins, and avoid the consequences of them, while thou mayest, thou art that man. Is eternal damnation so light a matter, that our escape from it

must be made a work of convenience? Look at the example of our Apostle: he stood not arguing with the Angel about a proper season, though it were then midnight, but complied immediately. A circumstance meets us here, which merits a particular attention. The Angel bids him rise up: but to what purpose, when two heavy chains fastened him down to the floor? and what would the soldiers say, who lay by the side of him? yet he made no difficulty; God never commands any thing that will prove to be impossible: so he rose up in faith, and in the attempt *the chains* that bowed him down *fell off from his hands.* And though you, in your own case, may think the power of sin which holds you down is so strong as to render all your struggles ineffectual, yet, you are to remember, that all things are possible with God: and that it is not your own strength, but a divine miracle that must save you at last. Fear not then the companions that lie by the side of you, whether they are evil men or evil spirits, whose office it is to keep you where you are, and confine you to your bondage: God can defend you against their attempts: the light which comes from heaven to guide you may bring upon them either terror or stupefaction, so that they shall become like dead men, and make no resistance. Neither look with despair upon your chains, nor pretend to say you cannot help your sins: hath he not said, *my grace is sufficient for thee?* His power, and the directions he hath given thee in his word, are to accomplish this great work, for which all the abilities of man are insufficient. It is required of the captive sinner, only that he should be willing and try to raise himself up: strength will come to him in the attempt, and the power of the adversary will fail; as the fetters and chains, which confined the Apostle, fell away

to the ground when he obeyed the voice of the Angel.

This case throws so much light on a theological question of great importance, that I shall take a little time to insist farther upon it, with your leave. It shews us, how the *endeavours of man* are consistent with the help and *grace of God;* and so confutes, as well the error of those who exclude the free will of man, as of others who reject the grace of God, because they think it would make human reason unnecessary. But this is not the case: for, doubtless, Peter might have refused to obey the summons of the Angel, if his *reason* had been *weak* enough: but he attempted to rise, and found himself released. We have other cases in the scripture of the same kind. When Peter healed a cripple at the gate of the temple, he bid him *stand up upon his feet;* but how should he do so, when he had no ability? his feet and ancle bones were doubled under him, and become useless: yet he believed, endeavoured, and stood upright. A man with a *withered hand* presented himself to Christ: he bid him *stretch it out:* but how could that be? might he not have said, "Lord, thou art an hard man, to com-" mand me thus to stretch out an arm, of which, as " thou seest, I have lost the use." However, he had the heart to try; and in the trial his arm became whole as the other. The moral therefore is this; that you are not to be so foolish as to oppose the work of your own deliverance: only be willing to be saved; put yourself into action; try to get up; and the power of God will be present to help you through. With this the doctrine of the scriptures agrees, as well in its precepts as its miracles; *work* out your *own* salvation—For *it is God* that *worketh in you* both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Work for yourselves;

but then remember, that your labour is not in vain, because it is God that worketh with you. I thought it proper to take this opportunity of illustrating the concurrence of divine grace with human endeavours; a very weighty and (as some have made it) a difficult subject. How far the act of man proceeds, and where the power of God comes in, we cannot exactly determine; nor is there any occasion; the fact is as I have set it before you; and one fact gives more light than all the metaphysical disquisitions in the world.

But to return to the case of St. Peter; after whose example, the soul being set at liberty, has recovered the use of its faculties, which *Satan* had *bound* with the *bond of iniquity*. God having begun the good work, the convert must proceed to do something for himself, under the direction of his guide, who will not yet forsake him. If we go on with the account of St. Peter's deliverance, we read in the next place, that "*the Angel said unto him, gird thyself, and bind "on thy sandals: and so he did: and he saith unto him, "cast thy garment about thee and follow me.*" The same advice is given to us, when we are brought from darkness into light. We are commanded to have *our loins girt about with truth;* to be right and ready in our faith; taking care that no folds and impediments of error hang loose about the feet to retard our progress, and become an occasion of falling. Whatever may hinder our steps is to be gathered out of the way, and the girdle of *truth* is to be put on. This done, we are to *bind on our sandals;* that is, we are to be *shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;* without which preparation, the Christian can no more pursue his way in peace and safety through the trials of the world, than a poor traveller

can walk with naked feet over rough stones and burning sands without being hurt. The man of the world is galled by every trifling accident; against which the peaceable spirit of the Gospel would be a sure defence. It is called the *Gospel of Peace*, not only as it contains the glad tidings of peace between heaven and earth; but likewise as it is a rule of peace to us in our conversation with the world; and oh, *how beautiful are the feet* that have put it on and wear it! The loins being girded about, and the feet shod, we are commanded *to cast our garment about us; to put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and become spiritual men, clothed with his righteousness, whereby our sins are covered, and we are *accepted in the beloved.* This is that *best robe*, which the father of mercy commanded his servants to bring forth, and put upon his returning prodigal. It is given to us in our baptism; it is preserved to us by a faithful participation of the Lord's supper; and it must be our care to keep it *without spot.*

When Peter had complied with the instructions of the Angel, he was bid to *follow him;* and when we are thus far prepared, it remains that we follow our deliverer, who is also our guide, in life and in death, and will conduct us from this place of our confinement to the city of the heavenly Jerusalem. In all our steps, we are to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who though he is gone before us, is still with us, to keep us in the way, and defend us from all the dangers of it.

Such is the deliverance, and so great is the mercy of God to every truly awakened sinner. He is *brought from prison and from judgment;* and who is able to declare the wonders of this his regeneration? The shadow and image of this great deliverance (for that

of St. Peter was no more) confounded and dazzled the mind of the Apostle, so that he was insensible of the reality of that which had happened to him—*He went out and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the Angel, but thought he saw a vision.* And if we look upon the wonders of our redemption, and upon the character of our Redeemer who is the glorious instrument of it, it seems incredible; the sense of mortal man is overpowered with the thought. *When the Lord thus turneth again the captivity of Sion, then are we like unto them that dream.* Some think the matter too wonderful to be true, and never recover of their doubts all the days of their life; but the believer, however transported for a time, will be assured of the reality of his deliverance, when other circumstances fall in to confirm it and shew him the truth of it. Is it not probable, that the same transport of mind which befel St. Peter, shall for a while oppress our senses, when the light of the last day shall shine upon us, and the Angel of the Lord shall take us by the hand to lead us forth from the confinement of the grave, to join the congregation of the faithful?

We come now to the concluding circumstances of this instructive miracle. "When they were past the "first and the second ward, they came unto the iron "gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to "them of its own accord; and they went out and "passed on through one street, and forthwith the "Angel departed from him." This part of the example is also to be fulfilled in us; the converted sinner must pass by the keepers of the prison. There is a *first* and a *second ward*, the world and the flesh, each of whom will think it their interest to interrupt him in his progress; but if he keeps close to his

guide, who has overcome the world, and suffered in the flesh, he will be able to perfect his escape, till he comes at last to the *iron gate* of death and the grave, that *leadeth to the city* of the *new* Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, and passes through it to a joyful resurrection. When our heavenly guide presents himself, it *opens of its own accord*, and leaves the way clear for him to bring out his *prisoners of hope*. When he had *overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*; and the gates of hell have no longer any power to confine them. Here then is the consolation we are to draw from this scripture; that a sure and certain hope is given to us, that though we are to *walk through the valley and the shadow of death*, we need *fear no evil*: the Angel of the Lord is with us as a guide, and his power is present to perfect the deliverance he hath now began in us. The whole work of the Gospel is here represented to us under a figure, as an *opening of the prison to them that are bound*; and our commission, like that of our Lord himself, is to preach *liberty to the captives*, and to proclaim *the acceptable year of the Lord*; that æra of grace, pardon, and deliverance, which began with the nativity of Christ, and will last till the consummation.

My brethren, it is of God's infinite mercy, that when I stand here, I have such *glad tidings* to deliver to you. What will be said for you, if you do not hear them, and make your advantage of them? If the *light* should *shine* upon you, and your *darkness* should not *comprehend* it? If you should wear your *chains*, and be contented with them, when you may enjoy the glorious *liberty of the sons of God*? If the iron gate should be shut upon you, and barred for ever against you, when the Angel of the Lord has offered to let you

out, that you may escape, and *flee from the wrath to come?* As it would have gratified the malice of the Jews, to have seen the blessed Apostle dragging his chains, and led out to execution; so will the evil spirits rejoice against you, when you are carried forth to punishment in the day of vengeance: they will mock at that indolence, that fatal drowsiness and stupidity, which lost for ever the opportunity of salvation.

The practical duty which we are to infer from all that has been said, is that kind of charity, which exercises itself in *delivering* others, either from sin or from sorrow. The question will be put to us, whether we have visited those that were in bondage, as the day spring from on high hath visited us? He who has no compassion upon his poor brother, that is bound, either by sickness, poverty, debt, sorrow, or sin, is insensible of the blessings of his own redemption: into his prison the light hath not yet shined, but *he is in darkness even until now.* To enlighten the ignorant, to raise up the afflicted, to restore the guilty to pardon, to awaken the imprisoned soul, and strike it with a sense of its own misery, and of God's mercy; these are the proper works of the children of light. If we do these things to others, then we shew all men that we believe God has done the same for us; and this is the best security we can find in the great day of inquisition and retribution. And why doth God require these things of us? Not for his sake, but our own: not that we may repay him for what he has done, but that we may qualify ourselves for the hearing of that blessed sentence, worth ten thousand worlds—Well done—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord: which, may he grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who was manifested to us Gentiles, that we should no longer sit in darkness, but have the light of life.

SERMON VII.

AND WHEN IT WAS DETERMINED THAT WE SHOULD SAIL INTO ITALY, THEY DELIVERED PAUL AND CERTAIN OTHER PRISONERS UNTO ONE NAMED JULIUS, A CENTURION OF AUGUSTUS' BAND.—ACTS XXVII. 1.

ALL the adventures of St. Paul are worth the consideration of a devout reader of the Scripture; but few parts of his history are more remarkable than this of his voyage and shipwreck in his passage to Rome. Several articles of that narrative, which is given us in the chapter from whence the text is taken, are so interesting, that I shall select them in the following discourse, and add as I go along such remarks as shall naturally arise from them. As to any critical consideration of the geographical part of this narrative, I have no concern with it, my design being rather of a moral nature. I shall not dispute about the true direction of the wind, called *Euroclydon;* neither shall I enquire whether the island called *Melita* was that which is now called *Malta,* near to *Sicily,* or another of the like name among the islands of the *Archipelago.* I shall neglect all such critical disquisitions for the present, and confine myself to such observations, as may teach us to understand in a better manner the goodness of God and the perverseness of man; both of which were signally displayed on this occasion.

The particulars I mean to extract and propose to your meditation are these following:

1. I shall consider the situation and circumstances of the Apostle's sailing a prisoner to Rome.

2. The error of Julius the centurion in not taking the Apostle's judgment concerning the voyage.

3. The attempt of the shipmen to flee out of the ship, and leave her in a helpless condition.

4. The comfort, encouragement and safety derived to the whole company from the presence of St. Paul.

5. The necessity they were under of throwing their provisions into the sea, to lighten the ship.

6. And lastly, the insensibility and ingratitude of the soldiers, who gave counsel to kill the prisoners, amongst whom the blessed Apostle himself, who under God was the saviour of them all, must have fallen a sacrifice.

Of these things, all of which are of important consideration, the first that offers itself is the situation of St. Paul himself, sailing as a prisoner to Rome.

He is brought into this, as into all his other perils, by his fidelity to God and his services to the world as a minister of the Gospel. The malicious Jews raised a clamour against him, and falsely accused him to the Roman Governor, as a mover of sedition; with full purpose to take away his life; so that he was constrained to appeal to the authority of Cæsar for his own preservation; in consequence of which, he embarked on shipboard with other prisoners to take his trial at Rome.

When the servants of God are persecuted, and obliged to fly from reproach and treachery and cruelty, for their own security; we may be tempted to imagine, that God has forgotten them, and left them to the malice of their adversaries: whereas he is then most mindful of them. They are, as the Apostle himself speaks, *persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but*

not destroyed: and he warns the Christians of *Thessalonica,* not to be *moved* or disturbed in their profession *by these afflictions;* for *yourselves know,* saith he, that *we are appointed thereunto.* God is often nearest to his saints when he seems farthest off. To us indeed, short-sighted as we are, it is more easy to discover and acknowledge his attention, when we are sensible of his bounty. We see and adore the hand of the Creator, in the clearness of the fountain, the brightness of the sunshine, and the calmness of the ocean; but his power as a Saviour, is manifested in the storms and troubles of life. Therefore he brings his servants into distress, that he may make his power known by bringing them out of it; with this farther advantage to themselves, that they are exercised and improved by the trial of their faith.

It is for this end that we see the life of the great Apostle diversified with such contrary visitations. We see him honoured beyond all other men by a miraculous call to the ministry, yet under continual troubles and perils, for acting in his proper character: while he is favoured with more abundant revelations, he is vexed and humbled with a *thorn in the flesh:* he pleads with all the dignity and power of an orator before kings and rulers, while he is fettered as a malefactor for the hope of Israel: he is admired, and *worshipped as a God in the likeness of a man,* at *Lystra,* and soon afterwards stoned by the same people, and dragged out of the city for dead.

On the occasion mentioned in the text, we see him on shipboard, in the company of soldiers and sailors, whose conversation is generally of the coarsest sort, and upon the lowest subjects; very unsuitable to the dignity and purity of an Apostle. But in this situation, it pleases God to distinguish and exalt him, as

a preacher and a deliverer. The ship that carries him becomes like the ark of Noah; he himself is like that second father of mankind, and all the souls embarked with him, whatever their character may be, are preserved for his sake.

But let us ask once more, how it comes to pass, that we find this holy man exercised with so many perils by sea and by land? The answer is plain; the Lord had said of him, at the time of his miraculous conversion; *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* He was the vessel chosen to bear the name of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Next to him who came into the world, to be the *light of the Gentiles,* he had the greatest office that ever man was entrusted with; he was made the *Apostle of the Gentiles:* he was preferred above all, and therefore he was to suffer more than all. The heroes of this world are distinguished by great actions, but the servants of God by great sufferings; and it is a better evidence, because it is a much harder trial, of our faith, to suffer patiently, than to act valiantly. A man may act for his own glory, and it is surprising to see how much is done, and spoken, and written, in the world, on this principle: but if he suffers in a cause which the world opposes, it is for the glory of God: he who was to be the Saviour and pattern of all mankind, was therefore made *perfect through sufferings.* St. Paul is now before us, in his progress to perfection, through the like way of patient suffering for the truth's sake. He has suffered by land among Jews, heathens, and false brethren; and now he is joined with shipmen and soldiers, to go through all the trials and dangers to which men are exposed, who *go down to the sea in ships,* and suffer shipwreck on that dreadful element.

If we follow him with our observations on this occasion, the first remarkable thing that offers itself is the error of *Julius* the centurion, who refused to take the Apostle's judgment concerning the voyage. "When much time was spent, and when sailing was "now dangerous, because the fast was already past, "Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I "perceive that this voyage will be with much hurt "and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, "but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion "believed the master and the owner of the ship, more "than those things which were spoken by Paul." The Apostle argues, first from natural reasons and common experience: their progress had been so slow, that much time was lost, and they were now fallen into a season of the year always dangerous to navigation. But he goes farther; he speaks as one having authority, and descends to the particulars; that the voyage would be fatal to the ship, to the lading, and to their lives. He received his information from the God who made the waters of the sea, and raises them into a storm at his will, and can still them with his word: in this character he gives his advice; but, in the opinion of the hearers, it has no weight, and the advice of a common navigator, the master and owner of the ship, is thought to be the wiser. What a misfortune it is to us, when we prefer the ill-grounded presumptions of man to the warning of an inspired Apostle; and this when the lives of so many are at stake! He that hears of this may be filled with indignation, and put the question to himself, "Had I "been in that ship, should I have rejected the advice "of St. Paul, for the saving of my own life?" Yes, you would: you would have been ignorant of the Gospel, as the people were to whom he spake; you

would have seen the great St. Paul under the disadvantages of a prisoner, going to Rome to be tried for his life; perhaps you would have heard the shipmen jesting in their way upon his want of skill, and asking how a scholar, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, should have any judgment in affairs of navigation? The pride and perverseness of men will always find some plausible reason for despising that counsel which is better than their own; and so did these here: but at last they saw their error when it was too late, and all the horrors of shipwreck were inevitable. We should often succeed much better than we do in common things, if we were to consult divine revelation, and take the advice of religious people, instead of trusting to the current policy of the world, or to the voice of an unprincipled majority, who cry out with violence upon very little ground of reason, as these did here. It seemed, the haven they were then at was not commodious to winter in; so they gave up their safety and their lives to avoid a little transient inconvenience. It may be very obvious to ask, who but sailors should give counsel in affairs of navigation? Yet we see by experience, a preacher of the Gospel knew more of the voyage than they did. And thus it happens with us on many occasions: we go to man for advice and miscarry, when we might have it from God and succeed. I think this observation might be extended very far. We live in an age when human wisdom is magnified far beyond its value; and, in the course of our education, we take its authority implicitly in many things, where the Bible would teach us better, and make us wiser as well as happier. For want of this, we too frequently make shipwreck of faith: and in many instances, reason, learning, true policy and true philosophy, are shipwrecked along with it.

3. It is a common mistake among Christians to suppose, that if we are to be saved by the power of God, we are to be saved without the use of natural means; but the contrary is plain, from the judgment the Apostle has given concerning the attempt of the *shipmen to flee out of the ship*, and leave her in a helpless condition; in which case, the lives of the greater part must have been lost. This case is very particular: Paul had been warned by an Angel of God, that there should be *no loss of any man's life;* and he had declared before them all, his own assurance, that it *would be as it was told him.* Yet now he admits it to be possible that all the rest of the company would be lost, unless the seamen should abide in the ship, to give their help to the last extremity. How is this? Can the promise of God fail? Assuredly not: but this we are to learn, that all his promises are conditional; and that his providence works so *insensibly* for our deliverance that it is left at last as a question for faith to resolve, whether it be Providence, or chance, or human skill that has saved us. To suppose the end, is to suppose the means that lead to it: to hope to obtain the end, through a dependance on the divine promises, while we neglect the means which should lead to that end, is the sin of *tempting God;* we tempt him to transgress the rules of his own *wisdom* and *justice* by an undue exercise of his *power.* He promises to work with us, not without us: his help is an encouragement to labour, not an excuse for idleness. He supports and feeds us every day by his power: he *openeth his hand and filleth all living things with plenteousness;* yet he hath pronounced by the mouth of his Apostle, that *if any man will not work, neither shall he eat:* it being intended, that every man shall find his maintenance by the blessing of God upon his own

endeavours. So, in the improvement of the mind, his scriptures make us *wise unto salvation;* but not unless we *search* and study them. His Holy Spirit is promised as a *gift* and an help to all Christians; but not unless they *ask* for it, and prepare themselves for its reception.

The case of these shipmen teaches us, that it is possible for those to be lost, whom God hath promised to save: which doctrine entirely overthrows that false notion of absolute predestination and unconditional decrees, by which many weak minds have been disturbed and led into grievous errors. We therefore conclude with St. Paul, that unless the seamen abide in the ship, and do their ordinary duty on board, and bring in their vessel so near to the shore, that the people may swim to the land, and seem to save themselves, they cannot be saved of God.

This doctrine will be of great service to us in the conduct of our lives, and contribute to our success in this world, and our salvation in the next, if we make a proper use of it. The promises of God are a security to those who so trust in them, as to work under them; but none at all to those, who shew by their presumption that they are unworthy to obtain them.

4. The comfort, encouragement, and safety derived to this whole company from the presence of St. Paul, is the next thing to be considered. The support which a good man finds for himself in time of distress, extends to those who are near him. After they have been tossed upon the sea for many days in dark tempestuous weather, and expected nothing but inevitable destruction, we see this blessed Apostle infusing confidence and even cheerfulness into those, from whom hope itself was departed. The society of a godly man answers the purpose of a new light,

when the sun and stars disappear. It is the reason why many sink into despair, and are lost in a troubled sea of sorrow, because they have no friend to administer properly the comforts of religion; none to raise their thoughts from the storm that beats upon them to the mercy of that God who stilleth the raging of the sea. See how the Apostle performs this office to those, who had brought him into all this danger, by neglecting his advice. Instead of being offended with their past perverseness, he considers their present distress; he talks to them as if they were his children, and tells them how they are all given to his prayers; he encourages them to eat with thankfulness for their necessary refreshment, and sets them the example in his own person. Here let me observe, for the benefit of those who may be in the like distress, that there is a source of comfort, to which all Christians may have recourse, though they are not blessed with the personal attendance of St. Paul. They have the word of God, which is a sure and faithful attendant upon us in the storms and troubles of life; we may travel with it by land or by water; there we may hear St. Paul speaking to us: there we may have the Psalms of David, accommodated to all the trials, dangers, and afflictions to which a Christian can be exposed. Thus we may sail with St. Paul in our company, and find salvation even in shipwreck.

5. Another circumstance in this voyage, from whence much instruction may be gathered, is this; that when they had taken of their provisions what was necessary to refresh them, after long abstinence, they *lightened the ship*, and cast out the *wheat* into the sea. What will not men do for the saving of their lives? Their bread itself is cast away, when it

endangers the life it ought to preserve. Thus ought men to act for the saving of their souls: they should *lay aside every weight*, that may render their escape from sin and sorrow more difficult and hazardous. Nothing should be retained that is inconsistent with their safety. A ship-load of corn is of no value, when men are sinking with the weight of it to the bottom of the sea; and what are all the possessions of this life, but superfluous and destructive, if their tendency is to sink the soul into perdition? When a vessel on a tempestous sea is about to founder with the weight of the corn she has on board, then it becomes undeniable, that the *life* of the mariners does *not consist in the abundance of the things which they possess*; so far from it, that from hence is their danger; and their abundance is their ruin. Every man who abounds with earthly possessions, in a world of sin and temptation, is in danger of being overset by them. If there were no storms in life, no blind appetites to agitate and disorder us, we might then possess much with little danger; a vessel deeply laden may float in a calm sea, and great wealth may consist with the safety of a virtuous person: but when the winds blow, and the waves arise, and there is a bottomless gulph underneath ready to swallow us up, the meanest understanding must be convinced, that abundance is not to be coveted. Suppose a ship to be laden with the treasures of the Indies; suppose her to be painted and gilded, and carved * with all possible elegance; of what use is all this, when she is going to be cast away with her own weight? Then the plain empty vessel, which goes light over the waves, and will convey her passengers safe into the port, is rather to be

* Nil pictis timidus navita puppibus
Fidit———

chosen. Look at the great and the wealthy of this world, and see how often they are tossed about with storm and passion, beyond the lot of other men; the slaves of pride, avarice, and ambition; to the torment of their lives and the hazard of their souls. *They that will be rich*, saith the Apostle, *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* This is too often the fatal effect of their abundance. Therefore, let not the rich, who are in such perils, despise the humble but safer condition of the poor; let not him, that is laden with the possessions of life, boast himself against those who possess little or nothing. We are embarked on a dangerous ocean; and the great question with us all is no other than this, *What shall we do to be saved?* One method is, to *lighten* the vessel, so far as it is necessary; to throw aside every weight that may endanger our salvation; and to cast out even the *wheat* itself into the sea, if it shall please God to make *that* a condition of our deliverance; that so we may escape out of this troublesome world naked and unprovided to the heavenly shore.

6. There is another wonderful passage in this account of St. Paul's shipwreck, the last on which I shall at present offer my observations; this is the counsel of the soldiers to *kill the prisoners*, lest any of them should swim out and escape. As St. Paul himself, being a prisoner, must have fallen a sacrifice in this barbarous execution, we have here a striking instance of the insensibility and brutality of the human mind, when it is neither polished by learning, nor rectified and softened by a knowledge of God. How strange is it, that these soldiers have neither the gratitude nor the compassion to start at the con-

sequence of their bloody proposal; for the sake of St. Paul, to whom they were indebted, not only for admonition and instruction, but also for their lives. His prayers for them all, which, without doubt, his piety would offer daily and hourly in a time of such distress, received this answer by an angel, "Lo, God "hath given thee all them that sail with thee." As to the soldiers, he had preserved their lives in a more especial manner, by detecting the treachery of the shipmen, and preventing their escape. When men have been fellow-sufferers (and such were all on board this vessel) it naturally endears them to one another. So many days and nights as they had been exercised with such imminent danger, and had despaired of life together, it would rather be expected, that they should congratulate each other on their common deliverance. But there are some hard minds, which are never to be wrought upon: such men would have stained their swords with the blood of their deliverer. After this example, surely no minister of Jesus Christ ought to be surprised, as if some new thing had happened to him, if after all his endeavours he finds some of those among whom he has exercised his ministry repay all his kindness with indifference: nay, if they should even oppose him, and hate him, and rise up in arms against him, for an attention to their welfare, and a desire of promoting their reformation and improvement. Vice, wherever it is found, has an interest against the ministers of the gospel; It therefore always was disobedient, contradictory, ungrateful and unmerciful; and such we must expect to find it at this day. What! are we greater than St. Paul? No, we are not to be named with him; our powers in the ministry are nothing when compared with his: it must therefore follow most certainly, that where he

could make no impression, we shall make none: the same sort of persons who would have killed him, will neglect and despise us; and such there will be, more or less in all places; persons of no breeding, of no feeling; who having not God himself in all their thoughts, have no regard to any thing or any person that belongs to him; who, if you were to save their lives, could never be won over to any decency or respect. Men are as different from men, as men from brutes; and the gift of God's grace, or the want of it, makes all the difference.

My dear brethren, when we consider these things, our duty, as deducible from the whole, is, to be thankful to God for the labours, and sufferings, and example of St. Paul, by whose preaching we Gentiles have been brought to the knowledge of the Gospel: and if we should be called upon to suffer contradiction, or reproach, or shipwreck, for the truth's sake, the same God that delivered him, can own and deliver us in all dangers and adversities: he that rescued his apostle from the fury of the waves, and the cruelty of unthinking heathen soldiers, can deliver all those who are engaged in the same undertakings, and bring them safe from a tempestuous sea of trouble in this world to his heavenly land; there to reign in peace with apostles and martyrs, under the captain of their salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VIII.

IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS LIETH IN YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN. ROM. xii. 18.

THE first and greatest design of the Christian religion, is to reconcile man to God: the next, is to reconcile men to one another, and to abolish, if it were possible, all enmity from the earth. That this will actually be possible, the Apostle does not affirm: and, as things are now constituted, it certainly is not. The world is a mixture of good and evil: it is a field, wherein wheat and tares grow up together; a plantation, in which trees that bear good fruit are surrounded with briars and thorns, offensive to the flesh, and fit only to be cut up and burned in the fire. Peace, whether public or private, is to be maintained by endeavours which are *mutual:* as the roof of an house is kept up by a wall on *each side*. If either of these be withdrawn, ruin must be the consequence. No single person can secure that peace, which must arise from the joint endeavours of other people: but he must do his own part, and contribute what he can towards it.

The duties which a man owes to society, will depend much on that state of life, to which it hath pleased God to call him. Men in society differ from each other in their offices, as the limbs and members of the same body differ in their uses. We do not expect that the hands should speak, or that the feet

should see: all men cannot perform high and eminent services to the public: but if every man keeps his own place and rank in quietness, he performs the duty enjoined in the text. And let not him that can do much, despise him that can do little; for mean as the offices of some men may appear, their help can as ill be spared, as that of the lower and weaker members in the body. The providence of God hath tempered the world together with so much wisdom, that we are all necessary to one another: and supposing we were not so, there is no member of society so insignificant as to be incapable of doing mischief, and disturbing the peace of others. Every man can do what vermin and creeping things, and insects are able to do; that is, every man, if he sets about it, can make himself hateful and troublesome to other people.

They who are placed in a lower station, should therefore submit to the offices which Providence requires of them; and if they cannot do any great good, they should at least be careful to do no harm. But they whose character in life gives them any influence over others, are bound to study the peace of society in a more particular manner. It is frequently in their power to moderate the unhappy differences of contending brethren, or to sow the seeds of hatred, and to foment strife, till it spreads into a wide and destructive flame.

God, who is the common father of us all, hath given us many precepts, which ought to lead us to peace and unity amongst ourselves. The reasons upon which they are grounded, are such as these; that a contentious disposition is not only sinful in itself but is the occasion of a multitude of sins. Who, that has any knowledge of the world, does not see

what strange opinions are kept up, what perverse actions are defended, and applauded, only for the purpose of supporting an opposition, when it hath been once begun. *Where envying and strife is*, saith the Apostle, *there is confusion, and every evil work.* So that contention is a sort of mother-sin, which brings forth many others, and some of them such as the contending parties never thought of in the beginning of a dispute. Such is the obligation which arises from the consideration of our own nature: if we consider the nature of God, we are told, that he is *the God of peace;* that his Holy Spirit is the spirit of peace; that his kingdom is a kingdom of peace; and that they who hope to be members of it in heaven, where there will be nothing but peace, must first endeavour to agree together upon earth.

We have strange passions to contend with; and unless we set a strict watch over them, their natural tendency is to destroy us and disturb the world. Experience would teach us, if the bible did not, that the seeds of strife are in all the children of Adam; and that if they are left to themselves, they will as certainly grow up into disorder and confusion, as thorns and thistles will spring from their own proper seeds. It is chiefly on this account, that the world is so miserable a place as we find it to be. The inhabitants of it, blinded by ignorance, and agitated by every turbulent passion, are like a fleet of ships upon a rough sea in a dark night, which are in continual danger of running foul of each other: and as no vessel can give a shock to another without receiving some injury to herself, so cannot any one man hurt another without diminishing his own peace and comfort at the same time.

Peace is so necessary to private happiness, that

without it there can be no proper enjoyment of life: therefore, let us now proceed to enquire, how so great a blessing may be promoted amongst us.

He who revolves this subject in his mind, will soon discover, that the passion which propagates the greatest misery in this world, is no other than *pride*. Let pride be out of the question, and the world will soon be quiet; as the waves of the sea settle into a calm when the wind has done blowing. How is a man to stop the workings of his own pride, but by thinking meanly of himself, and being contented with his own station? Why do we quarrel with others, but because we give ourselves the preference, and wish to be set above them? So weak and silly is this vain passion of self-esteem, that two families have frequently been divided for life, only because they could not agree, which of the two ought to walk into a room before the other. Peace can be the effect only of a meek and humble spirit. A proper opinion of ourselves will prevent all those murmurings and complainings, which are apt to arise in our hearts, when we see others preferred before us, either in the dispensations of divine Providence, or the favour of the world. In such a case we shall be ready to confess, either that they owe more to their own industry than we do, or that they deserve better for their abilities, or, if neither of these, that the Providence of God hath some ends to serve by their advancement, into which, though we cannot penetrate at present, we may take it for granted they are the best and the wisest, and that they will appear so to us, when God shall be pleased to lay open before us his own secret ways and counsels.

If any man is tempted to repine at his own lot, let him consider, that it is absolutely necessary there

should be a subordination of ranks in the world, each subservient to the other. All the members in a natural body cannot have the same place and the same office, some being appointed, as the apostle reminds us, *to honour, and some to dishonour*. The same God who hath disposed the limbs of the natural body in such an admirable order, hath given to men their proper stations in society, without error and without partiality. None ought to complain, that God hath set them no higher, but to be thankful that he hath not placed them still lower. The poorest reptile or insect in nature hath life and being; is wonderfully made, and as wonderfully supported: which is much more than it could demand from its Creator by any natural right: so the lowest state of life among mankind hath many blessings and privileges, for which a tribute of thanks is due to the bountiful Author of them. Many comforts are to be enjoyed by a thankful mind in the lowest station. The temperate and healthy inhabitant of the cottage is free from those distempers, which are brought upon the rich and honourable by luxury and indolence, and is unacquainted with the ridiculous cares and mortifications, which people of a higher rank are too apt to bring upon themselves by the boundless cravings of artificial appetites. To this consideration, a much higher may be added, which is this, that God hath given to the meanest of his servants an opportunity of obtaining and enjoying all the blessings of a better life: if he has withheld from them the riches and honours of this world, he has given to the poorest beggar, if a Christian, the privilege of claiming a crown of glory, and all the riches of immortality. There is a time drawing near, when we shall all be upon a level; the prospect of which is sufficient to raise the expectations of the

poor, and bring down the high looks of the proud. Those differences and distinctions amongst men, about which there is such a mighty bustle upon the stage of this present life, are but as shadows and dreams, which shall vanish away when the morning appeareth: and that they may not raise any disturbances amongst us, God hath found a way of bringing them to nothing already, in the judgment of every true disciple of Jesus Christ; whose gospel is intended to pull down this world in the heart, with all its vain distinctions, and to set up, in the place of these empty shadows, the great realities of the world to come. The gospel teaches Christians to consider themselves as members of Christ's body, and citizens of heaven. In this respect, they are all upon an equal footing: the rich has nothing to boast of; the poor hath nothing to complain of. St. *James* therefore makes the following proclamation to small and great—*Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.* The poor has no reason to complain any longer of his poverty, if God has made him *rich in faith*, and brought him into that society, every member of which is heir to a crown: and the rich has no reason to boast of that honour, which will set him never the higher in the kingdom of heaven; which is now but dross in the sight of God, and will soon be dust in the sight of men.

If these considerations were in force among Christians, there would be but little fighting and striving about the distinctions of this world. The doctrine of Christ and his Apostles would as certainly promote *peace on earth*, as it brings *Glory to God* in the highest heavens. If men did but permit the Gospel to

take effect upon them, it would give them power to bridle the tongue; that unruly member, which is so often the instrument of discord and destruction: an offensive weapon, in the strictest sense; and, which often wounds deeper than the sword. What mischief and bloodshed might have been prevented, if the tongue could but have been silent, when it was under no obligation to speak! How great a fire hath been kindled by one little spark! one envious word hath set families into a flame, and lighted up that fire, to which the devil will endeavour to add fuel, all the days of their life. There is no remedy in this case, but from the fear of God, and that faith, which will lead a man to self-abasement. Good principles may lay an axe to the root of the evil, and devotion may get the better of impertinence. Let the judgment be corrected, and the heart amended, and then the tongue may become the instrument of peace. He was a wise philosopher, who bound his scholars to a silence of five years; that they might not use their tongues, till they knew how to govern them; nor speak, till they had something to say. He is said to have used this as a test of his disciples; concluding, that the scholar who could deny himself in that which is most difficult, would be able to govern himself in all other things.

Thus far I have endeavoured to shew you, that *humility* is a necessary qualification in those who would *live peaceably with all men.* I am now to observe, that *patience* in bearing with the weaknesses of our brethren, and forgiving the injuries we receive from them, is another qualification, as necessary as the former. The wisest among mankind are subject to errors and frailties, which require a charitable and favourable interpretation, and though we have

no right to dispense with the laws of God, or our country, every man has a claim upon us for as many allowances as we can reasonably make; and it will be prudent in us to make them; because we ourselves are compassed with infirmity, and may stand in need of that indulgence which we refuse to other people. Human nature being so prone to offences, it must needs happen that our own persons and interest will be touched upon some occasions by those with whom we have to do: and then it will appear, whether that spirit of patience and moderation which most men would be thought to possess, is real or affected. We know how to excuse those that offend others; but if the same persons offend ourselves, then we can give as many reasons why we ought to be revenged on them, as why they ought to be pardoned in all other cases.

In order to correct this mistake, let us consider, that when any injury is forgiven, all the ill consequences which might have followed, and which are generally ten times worse than the injury itself, are prevented in the beginning. Affronts and injuries are like venomous serpents, which creep about to spread poison and destruction among mankind: and here, it is not so much the injury itself (which perhaps is a mere trifle) that does all the mischief, but the evil thoughts and passions which are stirred up in the heart. The hurt is not owing to the teeth of the viper; which give but a very small wound, but to the venon which they communicate to the mass of blood. Let an injury be rated according to its real value, and this evil will be prevented.

There is another advantage in this, of a much higher nature: for if we are ready to fogive others, we have reason to expect that God in like manner

will forgive us; our prayers will find acceptance at the throne of grace: the hands that are undefiled with cruelty and revenge may be lifted up for mercy; while the unfeeling sinner, who has been implacable toward his fellow servants, shall in vain apply to God for that pardon which he knew not how to grant.

But farther; as we are to forgive the faults of others, we are to be careful not to commit any act of injustice ourselves. Deceit, and oppression, and fraud, are the declared enemies of peace: and indeed, much of the confusion we see in the world arises from the evil designs of those, who scruple not to advance their own worldly interest by undermining and defrauding their neighbours. These are the arts of the sons of Mammon, which deserve to be avoided and abhorred by every sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. *Pride*, as I have before observed, is the great disturber of the world; but it becomes worst of all when it is joined with *covetousness*. The man who would appear to *be* every thing, when he is nothing, only makes himself ridiculous: but when he would not only be every thing, but *have* every thing, he becomes a torment to himself, and a nuisance to his neighbours.

It appears then, that the virtues of humility, patience and justice, are naturally productive of peace: and they will generally be found to answer the purpose, I say generally; for the apostle hath expressed himself as if the success would be doubtful in some cases. Some natures are so savage and untractable, that it is impossible to live at peace with them. There ever were and will be those, who are *enemies unto peace*; who like wolves and tygers will always be growling; and delight more in strife, than in bro-

therly love and quietness. There is a sort of men in the world (God forbid there should be many of them) who measure their wit by their wealth, and their greatness by their ability to do mischief: who think they make no figure in life, but so far as they are troublesome to other people. The royal Psalmist, addressing himself to one of this stamp, gives to every malicious person such an odious character of himself as he would detest and fly from, if he had the grace to see and understand it.—"Why boastest "thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mis- "chief? Whereas the goodness of God endureth yet "daily." The greatness of God is measured by his goodness: his power is exercised in communicating light, and comfort; he openeth his hand, and the whole creation partakes of his bounty. Being perfect in love and beneficence, he is therefore perfect in greatness. But look on the other hand, and you will find that mischief distinguishes the power of Satan: *his greatness* consists wholly in crossing the merciful plan of redemption, and counteracting the divine benevolence: the propagation of discord and disorder is necessary to the keeping up of his grandeur, and to the increase of his kingdom. They who follow such methods of making themselves considerable, may know of whom they have learned them, and with whom they will associate, when God shall cast out of his kingdom all things that offend. Different men have different talents, and may be appointed to different ends. Some may be ordained to try the patience of others, and thereby promote the glory of God without intending it, as toads, vipers, and vermin are answering some good purpose in the natural creation: and we ought rather to adore the wisdom which hath made them, and to give thanks that there

are such, than be offended with the Providence which permits them to live. What account can we give of such a perverse disposition, but this; that they who are thus at enmity with mankind are first at enmity with God? The wicked man, having quarrelled with God and his own conscience, is not able to agree with any body else. As there is no peace *to* the wicked, there is none to be found *with* them. They are troubled with that distemper of the mind, which blackens every object they look upon, and renders them discontented, implacable, and unmerciful. So that to sum up all I have said in a few words, be good Christians, be at peace with God and your own hearts, and then you will be at peace with all the world.

The rules I have laid down, if men did but follow them, would almost make an heaven upon earth. Every one might then sit undisturbed *under his vine and under his fig-tree,* in a quiet possession of his own rights. The helpless traveller need not then be afraid of those who lie in wait to plunder and destroy. The man who endeavours to deal justly and uprightly, would be secure in his property and his reputation: there would be no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets. Happy would the people be who were in such a case! but this is a state we can never hope to attain in this life. So long as there is ambition, extortion, and luxury above us; poverty, idleness, profaneness, and dishonesty below us, no perfect peace is to be enjoyed. But let not these things discourage us: our good endeavours, with the blessing of God, will be sure to succeed in a great measure; and if they should not answer our wishes here, we shall certainly be the better for them hereafter. *Blessed are the peace-*

makers, saith our Lord, *for they shall be called the children of God.* He that came down from heaven to promote the great work of peace, will own those as children to God, and brethren to himself, who have been encouraged to follow his example.

Grace and peace, saith St. Peter, *be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ:* teaching us in these words, that peace will be multiplied among us, through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ: whose word informs us, that we are all brethren descended from the same Father, and have one faith and one Redeemer; we are all fellow-travellers upon the same road to a better world, and ought not to fall out one with another by the way. And here, who can help lamenting, that religion, which ought to unite men, should ever be the means of dividing them; that the bond of peace should ever become the instrument of discord? It is to be wished, that we were all of the same profession; that *with one mind and one mouth we might glorify God.* But as this can never be, it is the part of the peaceable man to find out and esteem what is valuable in all professions, and what may serve, in a certain degree as a bond of peace to all. If then there be any man who worships Jesus Christ as God, and depends upon him as his Saviour, and loves the wisdom of Scripture, and sees the vanity of the world, every sincere Christian is a friend to that man. As to the errors there may be in his profession, he has another master to whom he is accountable for them; and it is wiser to lament them with compassion, than to reprove them with bitterness; for that very seldom does any good. Any persons whatsoever, who are seriously disposed to religion, and of a peaceable temper, may find something

to agree in, some seat to sit down upon together, if they have but the patience to look for it: and how much better is it for them so to do, than to make sport for unbelievers by their jealousies and disputes. Let us then resolve to follow the Apostle's advice, and do all that lieth in us *to live peaceably with all men*, for the sake of that present comfort and edification which peace brings with it, and the glorious reward that shall crown it at last. For though we are not able to attain to perfect peace in this disorderly world, they who labour after it shall at length find it, in that holy and heavenly Jerusalem, which will be *built as a city that is at unity in itself: peace shall be within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces.* Then shall the *flock* of God's *pasture* be unmolested in the land of righteousness; and shall enjoy that perfect rest which remaineth for the people of God, under the direction of that *shepherd*, who is the *king of righteousness and of peace.*

SERMON IX.

BUT AND IF THAT EVIL SERVANT SHALL SAY IN HIS HEART, MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING, AND SHALL BEGIN TO SMITE HIS FELLOW SERVANTS, AND TO EAT AND DRINK WITH THE DRUNKEN; THE LORD OF THAT SERVANT SHALL COME IN A DAY WHEN HE LOOKETH NOT FOR HIM, AND IN AN HOUR THAT HE IS NOT AWARE OF, AND SHALL CUT HIM ASUNDER, AND APPOINT HIM HIS PORTION WITH THE HYPOCRITES: THERE SHALL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH. MATT. xxiv. 48, et seq.

THE monition here delivered, is in the style of a parable, and contains the history and catastrophe of a *careless Christian.* It is not aimed at all wicked men in general, whether Jews, Turks, or Heathens, but at those only, who professing themselves to be the *servants* of God, forget him, and go over to the service of the world. So that by the *evil servant* here mentioned, we are to understand the apostatizing or worldly-minded Christian, who bears the name of a *servant* of the Lord Christ, but in practice employs himself in the business of another master, who has gotten the possession of his affections.

If we wish to see a perfect description of any man, we must in the first place be made acquainted with his principles. He appears then to be one, who deceives himself, and *says in his heart, my Lord delayeth*

his coming. He lays it down as a principle of action, that no account, at least no immediate account, of his actions will be required. He has a lord or master, who for a while is absent; and the report goes amongst his fellow-servants, that this lord will return and reckon with him: but this reckoning, in his estimation, is either none at all, or so distant, that he is under no necessity of paying any regard to it. His lord has been absent so long, and wicked men have been so often threatened with his return to no purpose, that it is more probable he will never return any more.

Principle and practice have as natural a dependence on each other as the cause and the effect. An evil life grows naturally from an evil heart; and an evil heart will necessarily produce an evil life. The servant here spoken of begins with thinking as an infidel, and then proceeds to act as a brute: he *begins to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.* Thus it is in every other case of the kind; immoral and sensual practices being the natural offspring of some false delusive principle, which is first *said in the heart:* neither can man follow his own corrupt inclinations, till he has either denied or perverted the revealed will of God.

But the parable proceeds to teach us, that although a man may cheat his understanding for a while, the deception is not long to be enjoyed. The day, which he puts from him, will certainly come, and be the more terrible for being unexpected. *The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.* His false principle will then be overthrown by a matter of fact. He says within himself, day after day, *my lord delayeth his coming;* till his lord actually is come; and then

his folly is manifest, when there is no time left to make any advantage of the discovery. Such as he is, he is seized upon, and brought before his master to give an account of himself, and receive the due punishment of his insolence: which is the thing declared in the words that conclude the parable; *he shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The parable then consists of these four particulars, 1. The unbelief. 2. The careless life. 3. The conviction. And 4. The condemnation of an *evil servant*, who, knowing his lord's will, and preparing not himself, is to expect a punishment beyond the measure of other wicked men.

Before I expound these things at large, it is proper to inform you, that the words of the text allude very plainly to the wickedness and punishment of the idolatrous Israelites in the wilderness. The people who had submitted to the authority of Moses, to be guided by him to the land of Canaan, were too well affected to the religion and morals of Egypt; both of which were irreconcileable with the faith and practice of the servants of God. When it became necessary that their ruler Moses should depart from them for a while into the mount of God, he gave this charge to the elders; *tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you.* Having thus assured them of his *return*, he continued forty days and forty nights in the mount; but he had not left them long, before they began to reason about his absence, and to make their use of it; *when they saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, up, make us Gods which shall go before us; for as to this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what*

is become of him. In this they discover the first workings of an evil heart of unbelief, which doubts of an event that must necessarily follow in the course of things; and of which it hath received all possible assurance. Moses had departed from them, only to return better furnished and instructed for the execution of his ministry; and without his return, his departure could have no meaning. Of this, however, the people doubted; and from unbelief they proceeded to ungodly living and profaneness. The evil servant in the text, having put off the day of reckoning, begins to *smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken:* as the disobedient Israelites, taking advantage of the delay of Moses, *sat down* before an idol *to eat and drink, and rose up to play;* first encouraging a principle of unbelief, and then defiling themselves with corrupt practices.

But *the Lord of these servants came in a day when they looked not for him, and in an hour that they were not aware of.* Moses, whose authority they had renounced, and whose very person they had almost forgotten, comes down from the mount unlooked for, and surprises them in the midst of their ungodly mirth. They had eaten and drank to excess, and were now busy in singing and dancing before the golden calf. Their folly and ingratitude were now manifest: there was no time for repentance, neither were they disposed for it, while they were in the midst of their sin. Their judge was come upon them; and nothing remained, but that they should receive the punishment of their apostacy. This is the last article, wherein the evil servant resembles the rebellious Israelites. He, according to the terms of this parable, is to be *cut asunder, and to have his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing*

of teeth; so they were instantly cut asunder with the sword. For *Moses said, who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.*

St. *Paul* hath wisely exhorted us, not to be *ignorant* of the history of those servants, who were before us in the church of God: because the things which are recorded of them *happened for ensamples* to us, and are *written for our admonition.* Their trials were the same in kind with ours, and our miscarriages were foreshewn in their disobedience. Amongst other particulars of their history, the Apostle hath selected that which we are now considering, and applied it as a warning to all Christians: *neither*, says he, *be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* In this he hath followed the doctrine of our blessed Saviour, who hath represented this story to us in other words, and applied it for our admonition. This history of the idolatrous Israelites, and his parable of the *evil servant*, consist of the same particulars, succeeding in the same order, and requiring the same interpretation; which observation will be of much use to us in applying the words of the text to Christ and the Christian Church; of whom the person of Moses, and the camp of Israel in the wilderness were the most considerable figures the world ever saw.

The *Lord*, mentioned in the text, is without all

doubt the Lord Christ; who said of himself to his disciples, *ye call me* Master *and* Lord, *and ye say well, for so I am.* As the Israelites were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, then passed through the Red Sea, and encamped in the wilderness; so we Christians have been redeemed from the powers of sin, and conducted, through the waters of baptism, into the church of Christ, the camp of the true Israelites, which is upon its progress through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly land of promise. As Moses, who was their *Lord,* left the camp for a time, and went up into the mount, to receive a law, which he was to deliver to the people: so Christ, our Lord, ascended up on high, that he might send a new law into the world by the hands of his Apostles. He is now absent from us at the right hand of God, and we his servants are here below in this wilderness. With respect to this his absence from the day of his ascension to his return in judgment, he represents himself to us as a *Samaritan* upon a *journey;* who, after a certain time, was to *come again* and reckon with the host. In another place he describes himself as a *bridegroom;* who *tarried* for a while, but at length should *return from the wedding.* Again he is signified to us by a man *travelling into a far country;* who, after a long time, should come back again to *reckon with his servants.*

If we go on with the comparison, we shall conclude, that the behaviour of the faithless Israelites, in the absence of Moses, will be accomplished in the people of the Christian world; of whom it is but too apparent, that the far greater number now do, and will continue to corrupt themselves, as the *evil servant* in the parable. He used the absence of his master as an opportunity of indulging his own vicious

nature, and of acting as if he had no master but himself. And are we not all of us witnesses, that Christians make the same use of the absence of Jesus Christ, as if their Lord would never return to require any account of them? Within the compass of a few years the people of this nation seem far advanced in all sorts of wickedness; and from the principles which prevail, the next generation may be worse than the present. And what is the beginning of all this? What but a neglect of the great doctrines of faith, and a consequent inattention to the judgment that must shortly come upon us? Does not the world cry out as it were with one common voice, *my Lord delayeth his coming?* Or, in the language of St. Peter, who set down the words which should afterwards be used by the scoffers of the last days, *where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation of the world?* If you should go amongst a large company of people, commonly called by the name of Christians, and should mention the coming of their Saviour, as an event soon to be expected, and greatly to be wished for; some would be ready to laugh at your simplicity; others would look grave, and be out of countenance for you; and it is to be questioned whether one single person, in any polite assembly, would have either the courage or the inclination to go on with the subject. And is not this a melancholy proof that they say in their hearts, though they do not declare it openly with their lips, *my Lord delayeth his coming;* and that they have a secret satisfaction in putting away all thought of their Master's second appearance in the world?

If you proceed to consider their life and manners, you will discover them to be of such a sort as can agree only with an *evil heart of unbelief*. When the

people had forgotten Moses, they fell to making a molten image, and were given up to all kinds of excess in eating, drinking, singing, and dancing in the worship of it. So it is now: when faith is gone, then the heart is given up to the service of the world; and idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, gaming, a multiplicity of theatres, and places of public diversion, extravagance, debauchery, profaneness and sedition, are the sad marks of its apostacy. Is not the Christian world over-run with these corrupt practices? Have they not first *said in their hearts*, and then have they not proceeded to act, as the evil servant in the text? This being the case, it is easy to pronounce what will follow: for it cannot possibly be long before the *Lord* of such *servants shall come in a day when they look not for him, and in an hour that they are not aware.* When Moses was forgotten by the Israelites, he came upon them, and surprised them in the midst of their idolatry. Thus it hath been and thus it will be: it is an invariable rule in the order of God's providence, that when men say *peace, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.* Such was the state of the world in the days of Noah, that preacher of righteousness. He declared publicly to the world, that God would bring a flood upon them to destroy them; and they had an opportunity of seeing him prepare the ark for an hundred and twenty years: yet they believed nothing of the judgment which hung over their heads; but continued all their evil practices till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So also in the days of Lot, they were secure in their pleasures; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from

heaven, and destroyed them all. So will it be with the Christian world, at the coming of Christ: their hearts will be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares, and pleasures of this life, so that the day of their visitation shall come when they look not for it: and if we consider what state the world is even now in, we cannot believe it will be long before the Gospel will be accomplished. And then, how dreadful will be the consternation of a thoughtless and profane world! their mirth all silenced in a moment; their grandeur blasted; their pleasure departed as a vision of the night; their vain boastings of happiness and security confuted by the actual presence of their judge in the clouds of heaven; and themselves hurried away, without any preparation, to the dreadful tribunal: some of them surprised at masquerades and places of entertainment; some in the act of cheating and defrauding their neighbours; some cursing and swearing over a gaming table; others lying drunk upon the earth in a condition worse than that of the beasts: what a miserable preparation is this for the sight of a just judge, and an entrance upon the awful scenes of eternity! But thus it must be. In vain shall the ministers of Jesus Christ lift up their voice like a trumpet: the world is too far gone to take any of their warnings; wickedness is too bold for any words to reform it; and therefore we may take up that exclamation of the Psalmist, *It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thy hand, for they have destroyed thy law.* And this brings us to the execution of that vengeance, which is the last thing mentioned in the text; *he shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The place of this punishment, and the punishment itself, are suited

to the nature of the crime. For where ought he to have his portion, but with the *hypocrites;* who, in his baptism, pretended to be the servant of God; but, in practice, never served any thing but his worldly interests and sensual inclinations? His being *cut asunder*, signifies his eternal separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power: the sword which shall give the stroke, is the word of God, which he has neglected and despised: the *weeping* which shall be in that place of torment, will be a fit recompense for all that profane mirth and noise with which he used to delight himself. They who now mourn and weep for their sins, shall hereafter be comforted, and have their tears wiped away: but they who laugh at sin, and make free with things sacred, as subjects of ridicule, will exchange their laughter for lamentation. The *gnashing of the teeth* with anguish and torment is the just reward of excess and drunkenness. The teeth of the Epicure, which never knew how to refrain themselves on a principle of duty, were the instruments of his sin; and will therefore be applied to express the justice as well as the sharpness of his sufferings.

What has been delivered concerning the character and the end of an evil servant will lead us naturally to the following inferences:

First, that it is the interest of every Christian to guard against the deceit of an *evil heart;* and to be careful that there is no lurking poison of *unbelief*. The generality of men are apt to conceive very shallow notions of faith. If they allow the facts of Christianity, they rest satisfied with their religion; not considering that if they have any faith, properly so called, it will take possession of their affections. Let them then examine their own hearts, whether

they think with any pleasure about the *return* of their *Lord*, Jesus Christ? Whether they ever converse together, and *comfort one another*, as the Apostle hath admonished them, with *words* upon this great subject? Whether they can pray sincerely, that the kingdom of God may come, and this vain world be removed out of the way to make room for that *new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?* Is their faith so strong and operative, as to lessen that esteem and value, which they feel naturally for the things of this world? If not, they may assure themselves, it is too much like that of the evil servant; who had just so much religion as to talk about his Lord, but not enough to expect him and prepare for his appearance. As unbelief betrays a man into carelessness and pleasure, so will a right faith be sure to operate with a contrary effect, and will make him sober, serious, vigilant and devout. The duty of a good servant is expressed in those words of our blessed Master, *let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the Lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately*. And surely gratitude as well as prudence should have its influence in making us serious and vigilant. For consider how he, our Lord and Master, condescended to watch for our salvation; continuing whole nights in prayer, and retiring into silence and darkness upon a mountain, to make intercession for a world of sinners. He offered himself to the scourge, to the thorns, to the cross, to the grave. Many painful hours and days did he watch for us, and paid at last the price of our redemption, even his own precious blood: yet we, miserable wretches

as we are, think it hard to deny ourselves any little gratification, and to spend even one single hour in prayer to God, or in humiliation for our sins.

Our subject teaches us to consider secondly, that as the return of Christ to judgment is reserved for the world in general, and will come upon them when it is least looked for; so death is an unknown period, reserved for every Christian, taken as an individual; and the day and hour of *it* may surprise him as much as the day of judgment shall surprise those who shall be alive at the Lord's coming. If we do not make it the great rule of our lives to be prepared for death, it may come upon us when we are most unprepared. To presume upon youth or health which are made the grounds of a false confidence, is the worst of vanity and folly; as daily experience too frequently teaches us.

I am here offering such considerations as are of use to all people, of all ages, and at all times. Happy will it be for us, if we lay them to heart: then will our *loins be girded about, and our lights burning;* and instead of being cut asunder in wrath, we shall depart in peace with those words of Jacob in our lips,—*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*

You have heard the punishment of an evil servant: now learn the reward of a good one.—"Blessed are "those servants whom the Lord when he cometh, "shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that "he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to "meat, and come forth and serve them." Excess and riot can last but a very short time; and when they are over, they terminate in weeping and gnashing of the teeth: but temperance and vigilance for the

Lord's sake, shall end in a perpetual feast. To abstain from the false mirth of this present time, the noise of which, while it lasts, is no better than the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, which consume themselves with their own blaze; is to find the true joys of eternity: and if the servant of the Lord can but refrain from *eating and drinking with the drunken*, he shall be rewarded with better fare and better company, when he shall partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb, and shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.*

SERMON X.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, IF THY PRESENCE GO NOT WITH ME, CARRY US NOT UP HENCE.—EXOD. XXXiii. 15.

THUS did Moses signify his distress for himself, and his people, when God threatened to withdraw his presence from them in the wilderness. The prophet knew it was impossible for them to go through the dangers and difficulties of their passage to Canaan, unless the God who had brought them out of Egypt should still be with them to guide and protect them. No less hazardous is the situation of every Christian in this world, than theirs was in their way to Canaan. We are all upon a journey, as they were, to the promised rest; and we are beset with such difficulties, dangers and temptations, that there can be no hope of arriving at it in safety, unless God shall conduct and defend us in our progress. So that we may each of us take up the words of Moses, and say, *if thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.* Miserable is the condition of those, who either do not know how necessary the presence of God is to every man, or who have neither assurance nor sense of its effects towards their preservation.

I shall therefore shew you, in discoursing on the words I have chosen, that his presence always has been with his church, and that it extends to every individual.

That the presence of God was with the church of the Hebrews, must be plain to every one who reads their history: and while to us this presence is an object of faith, to them it was visible, in the cloud and the pillar of fire which attended their camp, and the glory which was seen on Mount Sinai. But the presence of God was as manifest by its effects. He divided the sea for them; he confounded the host of Egypt which pursued them; he furnished them with water from the rock, and bread from heaven; he healed them when they were bitten with serpents; their clothes did not wear out, nor their shoes wax old upon their feet; their enemies were terrified and driven out before them; vengeance was executed upon those who tempted and seduced them; and when they were about to be settled in the promised land, all the wonders God had wrought were set before them, as inducements to gratitude, and obligations to obedience.

If we look to the history of the Christian church: that also was propagated in a wonderful manner, by the power of its preachers, and the fortitude of its martyrs; whom God invested with such wisdom as overpowered the disputers of this world, and prevailed against the kingdoms of the earth; which were at length converted *from the power of Satan unto God.* The universal monarchy established in the Roman Empire was really aiding and assisting toward the spreading of the Gospel, while it seemed to persecute and resist it; and at last the Christian religion was received as the religion of the empire.

We are apt to admire the works of God when he interposes for the deliverance and preservation of his people; but his providence is equally to be admired,

in the corrections and punishments which he sends upon them for their disobedience. For why does God choose any people, but to make them wise and holy, and lead them to eternal happiness by the ways of truth and righteousness? If they forget their profession, and disgrace it by their manners, they are corrected in mercy, for the preservation of God's truth, and the reformation of the society, which he has separated from the world. In the 105th psalm the prophet celebrates the mercies of God, in redeeming the people from Egypt, and feeding them in the wilderness; but in the 106th psalm, the same mercy is farther celebrated for the mighty acts of his judgments in visiting them for their sins: how he sent leanness into their soul for their lusting after the food of Egypt; how he destroyed Dathan and Abiram, and sent a fire and a pestilence upon the murmuring congregation: how he overthrew them in the wilderness for their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf, and their unbelief in not receiving the good report which was brought of the land of Canaan; how he sent a plague upon those who had joined themselves unto Baal Peor, and after their settlement in Canaan, when they defiled themselves with the works of idolatry, he gave them into the hands of the heathen, and they that hated them were lords over them: then their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. These are the works of God's Providence toward his church; he delivers it from the power of the world; he punishes it for disobedience, and humbles it to effect its reformation.

If we were to examine the history of the several nations of Christendom, since they were taken into

the church; we should find, that his providence has acted by the same rules, for the preservation of his truth and the reformation of his people.

But now I mean to prove that his providence extends to particular persons, as well as to nations and the church at large: for every person is a church and nation to himself, and no concerns can be so near to him as his own; therefore it would be of small profit to him to hear that God's presence attends the church; unless it can also be shewn, that it extends to single persons. And this it certainly does, and must from the reason of the thing: for why doth God's presence attend the church, but for the benefit of the individuals of which it consists?

His care is upon the whole for the sake of the parts; and the salvation of single men is the object of all his mighty works and of all the means of grace: he willeth not the death of any one sinner, but is desirous that all should return and be saved: therefore his attention is as truly upon individuals as upon societies. And the same rules are observed in both cases. In regard to churches and nations, Providence acts for deliverance or punishment as occasion requires; with regard to single people, the measure of God's interposition is according to the state of a man's soul. When a man is mindful of him, and careful of his duty, he gives a blessing to his affairs and undertakings. When success begets confidence and too much reliance upon this world, some loss or disappointment is sent upon him to rectify his mistake; when he falls into wilful sin, some sorrow or sickness brings him to self-examination, and he finds the cause of his visitation. When our Lord said to the man whom he had raised from the palsy, *Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee;* all these

inferences may be drawn from that short admonition: first, that his sickness was a visitation for his sin: it did not happen by chance: secondly, that he knew *what* sin in particular was the cause of his suffering; because he could not otherwise have profited by the admonition; for it is not to be supposed, that our Saviour, when he said, *sin no more*, meant, that he should be perfect and without sin; it being impossible for man in this life to attain to a sinless state: thirdly, it was implied, that he should pray for the grace of God; without which, though a man knows his sin, he will not be able to forsake it: fourthly, that if the afflictions sent upon a sinner do not reform him, something worse is to be expected; whence it is reasonable to think, no man ever was consigned to extreme punishment or total ruin, till he had slighted the lesser warnings of Providence. In some cases, the goodness of God operates in a striking manner, by delivering us from some sudden and imminent danger, to remind us of our continual dependance upon him. We look back with terror for a while, and wonder how it was possible for us to escape with life under such circumstances; but when we have rightly considered the thing, we see the hand of God, and feel the obligation we are under, of dedicating to his service the life which he has preserved to us.

All these things worketh God oftentimes with men; and he is now working the same with many every day. As his presence was with the Israelites in the wilderness, and his power acted for their preservation and correction, so it is now with us. Not a single circumstance befel them, which, at some stage of our journey through life, does not happen to us. He gives us meat and drink; though not from a rock.

nor from the clouds of heaven, yet often in some strange and unexpected way, which it was impossible for us to foresee. As he punished their faults, by bringing war upon them from the wicked nations who hated them, and took delight in oppressing them; so he raises up enemies for the trial and exercise of good men, if their case require it. We are told, that *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Whence it follows, that if his enemies disturb him, this may happen, because there is something in his ways which *displeases the Lord,* and wants to be corrected. Perhaps he has too much pride, or too little patience; and enemies are of great use to exercise our patience, and mortify our pride, by informing us of our failings, which they are always glad to discover. He who knows there is an enemy near, with a mouth open to publish his faults, looks the more sharply to his conduct, that his enemy may be disappointed.

Sometimes it may be necessary, not only that our enemies should be at war with us, but that even our friends should turn against us; that we may learn to depend less upon earthly comforts, and draw nearer to that one sure Friend, who hath said *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

In so high a subject as this of God's special Providence, there must of course be some difficulties, which will try those who are strong in faith, and perplex those who are weak in knowledge. These I shall propose and explain as briefly as I can. There are two cases, which at first sight seem to disagree with our doctrine; namely, the prosperity of the wicked, and the persecution of the godly: but these, when duly considered, will fall in with it.

As to the prosperity of the wicked, it is to be

noted, that there are minds which set no value upon any thing, but the possession and enjoyment of this world, and determine to have it at any rate. God permits it to them: he allows them what they desire. So Abraham said to the rich man in the parable, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things:* not such things as were good in themselves, but good in thy estimation: they were *thy good things:* such as thou didst enjoy and set thy heart upon, without seeking or desiring any better. This the rich man knew, and so had nothing to say. He to whom God permits what the receiver *calls good,* and prefers to every thing else, cannot accuse Providence of taking part against him. And had it been denied to him, it had probably only vexed his unrighteous soul to no purpose: for mortifications and corrections, though good in their proper place, are distinguishable as such only to the eye of faith; and we are assured too truly that *all men have not faith.* The prophet David, when he reasoned with himself upon the dispensations of Providence, was soon relieved under this difficulty: *I have seen,* said he, *the ungodly in great prosperity, and flourishing like a green bay-tree.* But then it follows, *yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea I sought him, but he could not be found.* His life, though splendid and promising for a time, was short and transient. He seemed to himself to have taken deep root in the earth, and thought his fruit would endure; but a blast struck him on a sudden, perhaps when he thought least about it. He was preparing to enlarge his granaries, and enjoy the increase of his goods, and *that night his soul was required of him.* Self-indulgence is a burthen, and they who live without it are frequently in better spirits; plenty breeds fulness,

and fulness breeds diseases; and so the lives of the rich are often much shorter than they might be; or it may please God by some sudden stroke to cut short the progress of a worldly man, to teach others not to *trust in uncertain riches.* Besides, the good things of this life are often but a temptation and a snare upon the passions: the great and the wealthy are in a slippery situation, more liable to fall than other men; and their circumstances bring them into so many evils, that contentment with safety, is far preferable to grandeur and danger, even when we consider nothing but the present life. So that upon the whole, we have no objection against a special Providence from this consideration.

Neither is there any real objection from the sufferings of good men, if we take their condition altogether. To those who place all their pride in the esteem of men, and all their pleasure in ease and indolence, they seem to be under great disadvantage, as if Providence neglected them: but this is so far from being the case, that the greatest favourites of heaven, to whom Providence has been most attentive, have been called to troubles and sufferings in this world, from wicked and unreasonable men. Persons of distinction, commonly so called, are they whom man has honoured, and who make a figure with their titles and their outward appearance: but persons of distinction in the sight of God, are they who are of superior minds and *rich in faith;* and of such it is the *privilege* to be scorned and hated by an evil world. Read the instrument of St. Paul's preferment, and you will find it runs in this style—He is a chosen vessel *unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

His suffering was no sign that God had forsaken him; it was his profession as a chosen vessel, his privilege, his honour as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. And all Christians are called to the same condition of life; honoured of God, and opposed by the world; persecuted, but not forsaken; and, when they suffer for the truth, his grace is more abundant; so that they can sing with joy under such circumstances as would provoke others to lamentation, and drive them to despair. Paul and Silas *sang praises* to God in a dungeon at midnight, when their feet were fast in the stocks. But their minds were still free and happy; for *the word of God was not bound. Ye shall know the truth,* said Christ, *and the truth shall make you free;* with a sort of freedom which no sum can purchase; the freedom of the mind: a freedom from the bondage of error, and vice, and fashion, that variable foolish tyrant; a freedom, which gives us a right to converse with God; to search into the treasures of his wisdom; to hope in him, to trust in him, and sing praises to him; all of which are privileges, such as the world cannot take away. The miser may be robbed of his wealth, the prince of his kingdom; but the Christian cannot lose the treasures of his heart, and as to the value of them, the psalm of a saint, within the walls of a prison, has more real comfort in it than the triumphs of an emperor, if he lives without God in the world.

Another difficulty yet remains with respect to the doctrine of divine Providence. Some think it an office unworthy and troublesome, beneath the Almighty, to attend to the multiplicity of small occurrences in human life. Yet this arises only from our imperfect way of considering things, and measuring the powers of God by the conceptions of man. No office can be

burthensome to him whose *eyes are in every place*, and whose word can speak a world into being. Our Saviour hath extended the attention of Providence to the lowest particulars in the creation; to the hairs of our head, and to the life of a sparrow. How can the resurrection of the same body be brought to pass, unless he whose eyes did see our substance before it was perfect shall have it still under his view after its dissolution? His attention therefore does not only extend to single persons, but to the dust of the earth, and to single atoms. How often do we see the most trifling occurrences productive of the greatest events? All are therefore equally under the direction of God; the small as well as the great; for they depend upon one another. If it were possible to suppose any thing independent of Providence, it would be the casting of a lot: but the wise man affirms, *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 33. And accordingly, in the choosing of an Apostle to succeed Judas, they referred the matter to the divine direction by the casting of a lot, and supposed that the Lord, according to their prayer, had thereby *shewed* which of the two *He* had *chosen.*

Having thus considered and stated the doctrine of Providence, with the certainty of God's presence and attention to the ways of men; let me tell you, the belief of this is so essential to the profession of a Christian, and so necessary to the comfort of life, that I know of no better test of the state of a man's soul, than a daily sense of God's presence with him, for the direction of his life, either by his own immediate act, or the subordinate ministration of his holy angels, who have received a *charge* for the preser-

vation of the servants of God. Wicked men have no liking to this subject; as if they expected no good to themselves from the attention of Heaven. Good men have no greater support in this world: they love to think and discourse upon it; and they celebrate the mercies they have received. Jacob, in his blessing, addresses himself *to the God which had fed him all his life long unto that day, and to the angel which had redeemed him from all evil.* St. Paul, looking back upon the persecutions and afflictions of his life, had a certain knowledge, that *out of them all the Lord had delivered him.* And the same knowledge will be more or less in every Christian, who reflects upon the occurrences of his life past. He may not be able to say, as the Apostle did, *once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep:* but, if his eyes are open, and he speaks the truth, he may say in other words, "at "such a place, and at such a time, was I preserved, "when my fortune, my comfort, my health, my life, "my soul were in danger: many perils have I seen, "from which nothing but the hand of God could save "me; many more there must have been, perhaps "worse and greater, which I could not see: but *out "of them all, the Lord delivered me,* and I am alive at "this day to praise him."

Without a firm belief of God's preventing and directing power, good men would not know how to live; and they see that for want of it, many are lost. He that has lived long enough to observe how many dangers there are in the world, of which he has no foresight, and thinks there is nothing to preserve him, but that *chance,* by which others *seem to be destroyed,* is in a miserable con-

dition; and I would not be in the like for all the world. When it is found that health is uncertain, and pleasure deceitful; that there are evils, which wealth cannot remove: nor wisdom provide against, and when with all this there is no sense of God's Providence correcting our sins and bringing good out of evil; then only disappointment becomes intolerable, and men send themselves out of the world in despair.

As the navigator, who has sailed round the world, and is arrived in safety at his own dwelling, delights to survey the dangers of the voyage, with his many deliverances from storms and shipwreck: and as the Israelites, when conducted to the land of Canaan, discoursed together on the miracles God had wrought in Egypt, with the perils of the wilderness, their various encampments, the victories they had obtained, and the cities they had destroyed; and repeated the wondrous narrative to their children, listening around them; so we may suppose, it will constitute a part of the blessedness of heaven, to look back upon the vicissitudes of this mortal life; and that the saints will delight for endless ages, in comparing the trials they underwent, the dangers they escaped, and the mercies they received in this their pilgrimage; adding thereto the greater wonders of their walk through the valley of the shadow of death, their resurrection, ascension, and glorification, which are yet to come; all of which will furnish matter for such songs, and be celebrated with such sounds, as no ear hath yet heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive.

In some passages of the *Revelation*, we have a slight prospect of this scene, with a foretaste of this heavenly

entertainment. "I saw, (saith the beloved disciple) "as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them "that had gotten the victory stand on the sea of "glass, having the harps of God. And they sing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the "Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, "Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, "thou King of Saints." *Rev.* xv. 2, 3.

SERMON XI.

FOOLS MAKE A MOCK AT SIN; BUT AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS THERE IS FAVOUR. PROV. xiv. 9.

BEFORE we consider rightly, it may be imagined that the words of Solomon in this place give encouragement to sin; as if sin were favoured by the righteous, while it is mocked at by fools. But the words have another meaning, and that a very instructive one: they teach us, that *fools*, those inconsiderate people who are without a proper sense of religion, mock at sin as a matter of ridicule; while the righteous have compassion upon sinners, as upon persons under the greatest misfortune in this world. He only can mock at sin, who knows nothing of the danger and misery that attends it. Laughter is, generally speaking, a sign of ignorance: it is the lowest faculty of a rational being, and the great instrument which weak people employ upon all occasions. They laugh at godliness, because they see no reason for it; they laugh at seriousness, because their own thoughts are vain and shallow; they laugh at misery, because they are without the tender feelings of humanity; they laugh at sin, because they do not consider the dreadful effects of it; they laugh at what is great and sacred, because they are attached to little and profane objects. Much laughter is, therefore, the symptom of a bad heart, or a mean understanding; and hath always been so reputed. The righteous man, who knows God, and the world, and himself,

and considers things as they are, finds no pleasure in mockery; especially, when sin is the object of it. The ruin of an immortal soul; the displeasure of Almighty God; the terrors of everlasting judgment; all of which are inseparable from the consideration of sin, are so serious, that they check the mirth of a righteous man, and dispose him to sentiments of soberness and compassion. Instead of mocking at the sin, he is afflicted for the sinner; he makes every charitable allowance for him, and is ready to do every thing in his power to deliver him from the effects of his own folly.

On this occasion, we have the fool appearing to us under his worst character, and the righteous under his best. The fool is never so much a fool, as when he becomes censorious, and mocks at sin: the righteous is never so respectable in his righteousness, as when he is favourable and compassionate to sinners. You will readily guess at the reason, why I have chosen to set these things before you at this time*. My desire is to lead you to the proper use which ought to be made of the example we have before us this day in the church; and to stop the mouths of those (if there be any such) who may forget their Christian profession so far, as to mock at the offence, when they ought to be grieved for the offender. I hope very few of those who are here present will be tempted to trespass in this way. They who are sensible of their own sins, and intend to repent of them, will be too wise to mock, either at the sin, or the repentance, of others: and they who, perhaps, at present do not resolve to amend, may yet have sense enough to condemn

* March 17, 1777, when this sermon was preached, two young women, by their own choice, did public penance in the church, at *Pluckley* in *Kent*.

themselves; and that self condemnation will be sufficient to make them serious. The time may come when it shall be improved, by the grace of God, into true conversion.

On these considerations, I persuade myself, you will attend to me, while I proceed to shew you,

First, what sort of person we are to understand by the *fool*, who is here said to *mock at sin*.

Secondly, on what principles *favour* is shown to sinners by the *righteous*.

After which I shall make some remarks, and add such advice as shall arise from the subject.

First then, the *fool* here meant does not signify a person so weak in reason, as to be void of common sense and understanding: but one who being without a sense of religion, has no consistent rule of action; no proper considerations to him; and is therefore given up to the follies of pride, vanity, selfishness, and all those other evil passions, by which the men of this world are commonly agitated: and a dreadful character it is: the harmless driveller, who can scarcely distinguish between fire and water, is a prince, when compared with a person whose delight is in mischief, and whose wickedness has made a fool of him. The one knows little about men: the other knows nothing about God; and the latter sort of ignorance is by far the most deplorable.

Amongst all his ill qualities, his disposition to mockery is what we are at present chiefly concerned with. Being evil himself he is disposed to make the worst of all mankind, that he may reduce them to his own level. Let a man be never so bad, yet he will invent some way or other to keep up, in his own mind, a tolerable opinion of himself; and as he cannot make himself good, he must make others evil.

Thus, though he is still no better than before, yet he seems not quite so bad, if others are no better than he. When he finds any sin in others, he triumphs in the discovery; as if his favourite maxim were exemplified, that all men are as wicked as himself: and where he cannot find sin, he supposes it. Virtue (with him) is not what it seems to be; and all apparent goodness has so much art and hypocrisy underneath it, that he pronounces all men alike at the bottom. But this of supposing evil does not quite satisfy him; he is never happy till he finds some appearance of it; and when he has found it, he makes the most of it, exposing every fault to the utmost of his ability. As to wit, such a person generally employs what he hath in rendering other people odious and contemptible. His business is to condemn, even though his ill-natured reflections return with double force against himself: for it is no uncommon thing with bad men to censure unmercifully that very offence, which is much more notorious in themselves: if they can hurt others, they care not how they disgrace themselves at the same time.

This of mocking at sin is the property of the worst of men; who think they have no other way of covering themselves, and escaping the censures they justly merit: and thus far mockery is a work of convenience. But in some tempers, where envy and hatred prevail, it is also a work of inclination. There are some natures which take pleasure in railing and defamation, as there are animals in the creation which feed themselves upon the sores of others; if there were no carcases they would be starved to death; and if there were no ill reports to be propagated, some people would have little or nothing to say: for what is all that scandal with which vain talkers amuse one

another, but mockery at sin? This is the life of their conversation: and if we could suppose the world at once to become prudent and virtuous, such persons would be struck dumb.

As this mockery is the sign of a bad disposition, it is also an argument of a weak understanding. It requires judgment to distinguish excellence, and to give praise where it is justly due; while very little knowledge is necessary to discover what is amiss: and there is in all men living something either of offence or infirmity, for a malicious mind to fix upon; something that is evil, or something that may be interpreted into evil. What is light and worthless floats upon the surface, like scum and straws, which every eye can find out; but what is valuable, is concealed by its weight, and cannot be discovered without some penetration: therefore we always see the shallowest people most addicted to censure: so that in short, mockery, according to the terms of our text, is the proper employment of fools; and mockery at sin, being the most ill judged mockery in the world, is a sign of the greatest folly.

If we would see how completely odious this practice is, we must take some examples of it: for vice never appears to be what it is, till we consider it in a vicious person. When the Israelites fell into sin, and were afflicted for it at home, or sent away into captivity abroad; the cruel heathens, who hated them for their religion, never failed to rejoice at their fall, and mock at their calamity; like the savage Moors on the coast of Barbary, who were heard to express themselves by shouts of laughter, when poor Christian people slipt into the sea and were drowned, as they were escaping from a wreck to the shore in a storm. When David, who had shone as a warrior, a

prince, a saint, and a prophet, was drawn away by his lust at an unhappy hour into adultery and murder, the drunkards made songs to turn him into ridicule; and the *enemies of the Lord* made use of his fall as an occasion to *blaspheme* the religion he professed. The Scribes and Pharisees, the greatest of all sinners, because they added a sanctified hypocrisy to their wickedness, were always ready to seize the opportunity of blackening other people, and of deriding the wisdom of Christ himself. When a woman was taken in the act of adultery, they were not only clamorous against her, insisting upon her condemnation; but they made use of her crime as a snare upon the mercy of our Redeemer; who they supposed would be ready to pardon her offence, and give them an opportunity of accusing him for not observing the laws of Moses. None were ever more busy than these hypocrites in bringing sin to light; not through any hatred against sin, or any zeal to the glory of God, but for some malicious purpose; either to make themselves appear better than they were; or with a view to some farther accusation against those who were better than themselves.

So odious is this vice of mockery against sin, that Satan himself is distinguished by it; who is never so much a devil, as when he is employed in accusing the brethren; insomuch that the word *devil*, in the original Greek, signifies *an accuser*. He first tempts men to sin; then ridicules them for their folly, and accuses them to God for their offences. Half his employment consists in treasuring up all the evil he can find in the best men, that he may have it to plead against them in the day of judgment. No faith, no virtue, no charity, no truth, no devotion, will ever charm that deaf adder into a good opinion of any one

saint upon earth; but their failings, their infirmities, their omissions, their mistakes, are the objects of all his attention and vigilance: and if that evil spirit, whose portion is everlasting torment, can be capable of any delight, it is at the fall of godliness, at the ruin of virtue, at the reproach of religion, at the apostacy of a believer.

We have very lately had an opportunity of observing the conduct of different persons, in respect to the unhappy case of a well known divine*, now under disgrace and conviction for an offence which is capital by the laws of this country. As I have passed along the streets of our great city, I have heard him scoffed at, by the vilest of the people, in profane songs and ballads; his profession insulted, and Christianity itself, set at nought for his miscarriage; while the wise, and the virtuous, and the pious have been sighing over him in secret, recommending him to God's mercy in their closets, or lamenting his fall in their conversation: and indeed multitudes of people have seemed so affected with his case, from the consideration of his function and character, that there must, on the whole, be more piety and less malice than we should expect to find in an age so given up to vice and dissipation.

From hence let us proceed to the second, and the more agreeable part of our subject; which leads us to consider on what principles, *favour* is shewn to sin by the *righteous*. By the *righteous*, those persons are signified who are what we call good men in opposition to the wicked. They have a proper sense of religion: their thoughts are in subjection to the rules of the divine law, and their passions are softened by devotion. Such people can be no *friends to sin;* and

* The late unfortunate Dr. Dodd.

yet it is true, that sin finds more favour with them than the worst of sinners. But what is this favour? It is not here to be understood, that the righteous are possessed by a mean spirit, which excuses, and makes light of, all the evil it meets with; as some are wont to do, who set up for charitable persons, and court the favour of the public by giving every worthless man a good character. He is a false-hearted physician, who leaves the patient insensible of his illness, and tells him he has nothing to fear from the worst distemper to which mortals are subject. Such mistaken favour as this proceeds either from weakness or artifice. He, who finds no faults can give no praises; because he has destroyed the proper distinction between good and evil. The favour of the righteous is quite of another sort; it is not a symptom of folly but of wisdom: and it reasons thus: that as sin is in itself the greatest calamity, and the cause of all other calamities there are in the world, it is as cruel and absurd to mock at a man for his sin, as it would be to mock at him for a leprous body, or a broken limb. Sometimes the very appearances of sin are lamentable to a compassionate man; but to a religious man, the consequences are always so. The ruin of innocence, the loss of a good conscience, the misapplication of a good understanding, the forfeiture of God's protection, disappointment and misery in this world, and the fearful looking-for of judgment in the next, are dreadful considerations, which a righteous man can never separate from the notion of sin. However fair and flattering it may look for a time, (as many fatal diseases have but light symptoms in the beginning,) these are the proper issues of it at last. How many thousands of young men, through the deceitfulness of sin, and thoughtlessness of youth, having yielded to

the first temptations and beginnings of sin, have been drawn by an easy progress from idleness to pleasure, from pleasure to extravagance, from extravagance to vice, from vice to beggary, from beggary to dishonesty, and from dishonesty to infamy and despair! How many unfortunate young women, too little aware of their own danger, have been seduced from their natural modesty, into shame and disappointment; lost and forsaken in this world, neglected by all honest people, despised very probably and avoided by those who seduced them, and dragging on a miserable life in poverty and infamy; who might have lived innocent and useful and happy, if they had duly considered the nature of sin, before they had resigned themselves to a sinful life! What the sword and famine and pestilence are to a nation, such is sin to a single person. All the havock that is made in the mind, the body, or the fortune, proceeds in some shape or other from this universal cause of evil: there is no one calamity incident to the nature of man, which sin cannot, indeed, which it doth not naturally, produce. Therefore the righteous man considers the sinner as a person taken in a snare, or fallen into a pit, or maimed in all his faculties by the cruel adversary of mankind. Instead of despising him, he grieves for him. He finds him in the same miserable condition with that poor traveller in the parable of the Gospel who in his way from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among thieves, which left him naked, and wounded, and half dead upon the ground. Who can mock at such a spectacle as this? He only, who either has no sense or no feeling: whose understanding is darkened, and whose heart is hardened: yet this is the real inward condition of a sinner; therefore the righteous man takes the part of the good Samaritan; he sees him

and has compassion on him; he raises him, from the earth to which he is fallen, and pours balm into his wounds. What a pleasure would a generous mind take in releasing a poor wretch bound hand and foot by thieves, and left to perish in the field! How happy is the good man in the opportunity of redeeming a poor Christian slave, who has been chained to the oar, and beaten by unfeeling Turkish tyrants! Such is the satisfaction we ought to take in restoring a sinner to his liberty. All men are entitled to this pity from us by the common ties of humanity: the effects of sin are to be deplored even in Heathens, Jews, and Savages: but Christians have a nearer claim upon us, as members of the same body, in which we are all to rejoice and suffer together. The righteous therefore, instead of triumphing in the sin of his neighbour, and aggravating his fault, is ready to offer any thing that can be said in the way of extenuation: that the sinner might offend through ignorance; that if he had known better, he would have done better; that he might be surprised into sin in an unguarded hour by the sudden violence of some temptation. Charity hopeth all things that are good, and believeth all things that are favourable. And, to conclude these observations, as the fool in mocking at sin imitates the devil, the righteous in shewing favour follows the example of Jesus Christ, who was even reflected upon for his condescension as the *friend of publicans and sinners*. But here we must be careful to urge the example of our blessed Saviour so far only as it will go. The malice of the hypocrite, and the sins of the impenitent, were the objects of his compassion, and even of his tears; but sin is no object of *pardon*, till it is confessed and repented of. We are commanded to pray for those that revile us and use us despitefully;

but God himself is not faithful and just to forgive us our sins, till they are confessed by the penitent. Christ wept over Jerusalem for the calamities which its apostacy should bring upon it, and devoutly wished it might have seen the things which belonged to its peace; but he pardoned sin in those only who wept for themselves; and none of this temper were ever cast out, when they applied to him.

I am now lastly to add some advice proper to the subject.

The doctrine we have heard is this; that the righteous is favourable, and the fool is censorious. Let us therefore be careful not to mistake that mockery for wit, which is the greatest instance of folly. To mock at the evil or the shame of sin in those who are guilty of it, is the height of cruelty and malice; it is inhuman; it is more like an undistinguished brute, than one who is indued with the tender feelings of a rational man: and to mock at sin itself, as if there were no harm in it, is the way to let sin loose upon us: it saves trouble to the tempter, by taking off those restraints of religion and virtue which stand in his way. No words can make sin so horrible as it really is. It ruins individuals every day, in mind, body and estate; and there is a time when it shall destroy the world, as certainly as the fire of the last day shall consume it. If he, that trifles with fire, is accounted a mad man, what must he be, who makes a mock at sin? For when fire and sword, and famine and pestilence, are laying waste the world, sin is the spring which puts them all in motion.

Mockery, being an act of pride as well as folly, is very dangerous to those who practise it; because *pride goeth before a fall;* and he, that mocks at sin, is never far from falling into it. The offence is such as

ought to be in justice, and generally is, punished with subsequent disgrace and humiliation. He, that mocketh at others, shall be mocked at himself. We are warned not to be *high minded*, but to *fear*. When the wise man sees another fall, he is immediately in fear for himself, knowing that we are all compassed with the same infirmities, and that he himself may come to want that favour which he refuses to another. If he is told of any unhappy person, whom sin hath destroyed or betrayed, he has reason to bless God, that he himself was not made an example to that man, who is now made an example to him. And let me tell you, that no man can be in a safe condition, but he who thus judges of himself. Where there is great danger, there is no safety but in great fear; therefore the Christian is exhorted to leave mockery and levity to the giddy, thoughtless people of this world, who see not the danger of their own situation; and to work out his own salvation *with fear and trembling*.

But of all the considerations which occur on our present subject, this is the most alarming; that they, who make sin the object of their mockery, incur the danger of being themselves cast off with scorn by Almighty God in the great day of retribution. There is an hour of distress, when such *shall call upon God, and he will not answer; he shall laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.* Can we conceive any thing so dreadful, as to be mocked at by him, who is armed with all the instruments of vengeance? Of whom it is written, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* The day is approaching, when we shall each of us be stretched upon our beds in a dying condition: and then the sins of our past life will present themselves to our imagination: so that while the body is sinking with weakness, the mind perhaps

shall be overpowered with sorrow and amazement. Then, what will become of the unmerciful! How shall that tongue dare to ask forgiveness, which delighted in accusation and mockery? How shall those hands be lifted up for mercy, which never knew how to spare?

That we may not fall into this fearful state, let us now provide against it in time: let us be serious to consider the danger of sin; humble, to confess our own infirmities; charitable, to extenuate and overlook the miscarriages of others: then, instead of fearing the threatenings, we may hope in the promises of God, especially in this; *Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*

SERMON XII.

NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.—1 COR. xiii. 13.

THESE three virtues support the Christian life, as the elements support the world. No religion but the Christian did ever teach mankind any one of these virtues: they are all peculiar to the Gospel: and so the Apostle intimates by calling them *these three;* joining them together as the three elements of the Christian system, none of which ever were or could be found in any other. When he compares them, he gives the preference to *Charity;* and with good reason; as you will see, when you have considered *what* it is. To describe it in as few words as possible, it signifies *the friendship of Christians;* the love we ought to have for *the brethren;* that is, for the church and all its members, for the sake of Christ. It is the virtue which binds Christians to one another upon earth, and shall unite them for ever in heaven: it proves us to be true disciples of Christ in the eyes of the world; and it recommends us to God, because it brings us to a nearer resemblance with himself; for *God is love* *.

To understand this virtue rightly, we must know whence it proceeds, and how it is to be attained.

* 1 John iv. 8

This may be gathered from the text; where the Apostle hath placed the three great virtues of a Christian in their natural order. The first of them is *Faith;* the second is *Hope;* and the last is *Charity;* Hope arises from Faith, and Charity from Faith and Hope. Where there is no Faith, there can be no Hope; and where there is neither Faith nor Hope, there can be no Charity.

This is what I shall endeavour to prove in the following discourse; and to correct a common mistake concerning the nature of Charity, so far as the time will permit.

If we enquire into the nature of Faith, we shall find, that it is a kind of *Spiritual Sense;* without which we cannot receive the Christian doctrines, nor believe the promises of God. It is that kind of apprehension, with which we admit things *not yet seen:* and as the word of God treats chiefly of *such* things, Faith is the faculty with which we receive the word of God; if we receive it at all. *By Faith,* says the Apostle, *we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* We should not so much as know that God *created* the world, unless he himself had informed us of it: and so weak is human reason without Faith, that some, who pretend to be wiser than all other men, do not believe this after they have been told of it. The general object of our Faith is the word of God, as revealed to us in the Scripture; the more particular object of it is the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, as it includes the whole work of our regeneration and final salvation. Till we admit of this, and of the nature of the person, both God and man, by whom it is accomplished, we have no Faith. St. John reduces

Faith to this single article of *receiving the record God hath given of his Son.* He that believeth not God, saith he, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So that to believe in God, according to the terms of the gospel, is to believe in his son Jesus Christ; who as the promised seed, the Conqueror of the serpent, and the Redeemer of the world, has been the object of Faith to all believers from the beginning of the world. By virtue of this Faith, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Cain brought of the *fruits of the earth;* Abel brought a sacrifice, and shed the *blood* of it; confessing thereby, as a true believer, that *without shedding of blood* there was *no remission* of sin. All the saints of old time obtained a good report on the same principle: they believed that man is fallen, and must be redeemed by a saviour; that this life is a pilgrimage; and that there is an heavenly inheritance, which the saints shall possess after the resurrection from the dead. Such was their faith, and such is ours; and, when we have it, it is our defence against all the assaults of our spiritual enemies: "Above all "(saith the Apostle) taking the *shield of faith,* "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery "darts of the wicked." Faith has an answer to all temptations, a solution of all difficulties; and we may now add farther concerning it, that it is the only introduction to the virtue of *Hope.* The heart may as well be supposed to have gladness in it without having life, as the Christian can be supposed to have Hope without having Faith. For *Faith,* as the Scripture declares, *is the substance of things hoped for:* which means literally, that Faith is the groundwork

or foundation of Hope. This, therefore, is now, in its proper place, to be considered.

When the root of Faith is once planted in the heart, Hope will naturally grow out of it. The word of God is a seed, which, by the operation and power of divine grace, will be unfolded, and yield its fruits. Of these Hope is the first: for when Faith has received the promises, Hope will rejoice in the expectation of their accomplishment. Faith informs us, that Christ is risen from the dead: Hope learns from thence, that he is the *first fruits* of an *harvest*, and that all the sheaves of the field shall follow him. Faith tells us, that he is seated at the right hand of God: Hope infers, that he is gone there to prepare a place for *us*. Faith knows that he shall return to judge the world: Hope is assured, that *his reward is with him:* in a word, Hope expects what Faith promises; and therefore, where there is no faith, there can be no hope: so that it is better not to be born, than not to be a Christian. Such as the world would be without the light of the sun, to gild and adorn the objects of the creation, such is the life of man without the hope of a Christian. To the unbeliever all things are dark and dismal: pleasure is worthless, and pain is insupportable. How miserable would be the condition of the sailor, when he is traversing the wide ocean, if he had no hope of reaching the desired haven? It is this expectation, which supports him under the dangers of the storm, and the labours and sufferings of a tedious voyage. And every Christian is supported on the same principle: he looks forward to the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul; and the faculty, or passion of the mind, with which he looks forward, is no other than Hope. Faith accepts the means of salvation, and Hope looks to the

end of it. The object of a Christian's hope is the appearance of Christ in glory, to dispel the shades of death, and put his disciples in actual possession of the promised inheritance. At present a cloud has received him out of our sight; but we know, that other clouds shall restore him to us! and that, when he appears the second time, he will appear without sin unto salvation. We see the blessed Apostle St. Paul so animated with this hope, that he triumphed over the afflictions and sufferings, under which an ordinary man, with the greatest human fortitude, must have sunk; we hear him even uttering praises to God, that he had the honour to suffer for the name of Christ: and, when the time of his martyrdom was approaching, "I am now, says he, ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." There is a day approaching, when all they, who suffer from unrighteous judges upon earth, shall be tried and rewarded by a righteous judge from heaven: and this hope is an anchor to the soul, which keeps it steady to its profession in life and in death; even when the winds rage, and the waves beat, and the deep threatens to swallow it up in destruction. While the body is confined to the objects of sense, and circumscribed by this lower world, their thoughts enter *within the veil* to survey and enjoy the heavenly things there laid up in store for them. This glorious light, which is presented to the imagination of every believer, was realized to the senses of the blessed St. Stephen. When the Jews gnashed upon him with their teeth, and were prepared to stone him to death, he, being

full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and said, "Behold, I see "the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the "right hand of God." This happened for an assurance to that noble army of martyrs, who were afterwards to suffer in the same cause: the very name of *Stephen*, the first of martyrs, expresses the reward of those who were to suffer after his example: it signifies a *crown*. From St. Paul and St. Stephen we may understand the nature and efficacy of Christian hope; which they, who love the appearing of our blessed Saviour as much as these disciples did, may experience in the same degree. But such hope must be founded upon faith: it is never to be attained on any other condition. St. *Paul* had *kept the Faith;* otherwise he would not have rejoiced at the approach of death. The martyr, Stephen, was first *full of faith;* without which he had never beheld the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Through faith and hope, thus depending on each other, we are led to the consideration of *charity;* the third and greatest of the Christian virtues.

The word which we translate charity in the new testament, is *love;* and, according to the Apostle's description of it, it means that brotherly love and affection, that spirit of peace, unity, and benevolence, which is the life and soul of the Christian society.

There are two mistakes in regard to the nature of charity, which are so current amongst us, that it is necessary to remove them, before the nature of this virtue can be understood by a modern audience.

Some think that charity consists entirely in giving money to the poor: but in this they are greatly mistaken. Almsgiving is a branch, and a necessary

branch, of charity; but it is no more; and very often it is not so much; for many are bountiful, who are not charitable; and many are charitable, who have it not in their power to be bountiful. *Though I give all my goods to feed the poor,* saith St. Paul, and *have not charity, I am nothing.* It is therefore possible to give every thing to the poor, and still to have no charity. And it is possible for a Christian to be very charitable, who has nothing more to give than a cup of cold water; because he gives it upon a right principle. Charity, therefore, is something more sublime than the bare giving of money, or feeding of the poor: if this were all, what must they do, who have no money to give? Yet the poorest Christian must have charity, if he hopes to be saved.

There is a second mistake concerning charity, which deceives many. Charity, according to a fashionable opinion of it, is a virtue which finds excuses for those who depart from the doctrines and worship of the Christian church. Such charity makes light of all differences among Christians; it can sit by quietly, and see the church of Christ converted into a Babel of confusion; pretending, that morality, like that of sober heathens, is all that gives excellence to Christianity; and that, if the moral precepts be secured, it matters not what becomes of creeds, articles and sacraments. But, my brethren, that is a poor sort of charity, which knows nothing more than to find excuses for the breach of charity, and thinks itself authorised to publish *indulgences* for errors, which are destructive to men's souls: nor is that charity any better, which, while it feeds the poor, can delight itself in a proud, pharisaical singularity, and look with contempt and hatred upon pious Christians, because they set a proper value upon ortho

doxy and uniformity. All this will appear to you, if you listen to the instruction of the Apostle, and learn from thence what charity really is.

Upon occasion of some divisions and disturbances, which had arisen in the church of Corinth, from some who were proud of their spiritual gifts, and had set themselves up in opposition to their brethren; the Apostle teaches them, that whatever differences there might be in their qualifications, they were all to be animated by the same spirit, and to behave themselves peaceably, as members of the same body. That it was as unnatural for Christians, who had but one communion, to divide themselves into parties, as for the members of the body to oppose one another, and follow separate interests not consistent with the unity of the whole. That no superior knowledge of the Gospel, no miraculous gifts, no qualification whatsoever, would warrant any man to make a division in the body of Christ. This is the subject of the 12th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians; as you will understand, if you read it with attention. Thence the Apostle proceeds to describe charity, in the 13th chapter, from the last verse of which I have taken the words of the text: and he recommends this virtue to them, as superior to all gifts and endowments: for all faith and all knowledge were intended as introductory to this virtue. All knowledge is given to Christians, to keep them together in one body, not to be a pretence for dividing themselves into parties: their knowledge is then worth nothing, because it does not answer its chief purpose: for peace and unity, the objects of it, are so far superior, that they shall be perfected in heaven, when all prophecy, all preaching, all the knowledge we now have, shall be at an end.

Charity then is that principle of love and friendship, which preserves the unity of the Christian society, and binds Christians to Christ and to one another, as members of his mystical body: it unites upon earth those who are to be united in heaven; and therefore it must be the constant endeavour of every true Christian to promote it by every method in his power; by his words and his works; his conversation and example. *By this*, said our blessed Saviour, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*. Love is the mark, by which his disciples are to be distinguished from other men: nay, the words of Christ inform us, that the unity of his church is the proof of his divine mission, and the great testimony to the truth of his religion—*That they all may be one* (says he) *as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* And such was the unity and affection of Christians in the primitive times, that it moved the admiration of heathens, who were heard to say, *Behold, how these Christians love one another!* If the same people were to see the multiplied divisions of the present times, and to hear the trifling reasons and vain conceits on which they are grounded, and by which they are defended; they might then say, *Behold, how these Christians hate one another!*

After what hath been said, you will easily be persuaded, that there can be no charity without faith and hope: indeed it is an absurdity to suppose it: there might as well be a Christian without Christianity. Charity is the end, faith and hope are but the means that lead to it: the *end* of the commandment is *charity:* all doctrines, all precepts, all revelations are given, to build up this divine principle in the heart.

So far as charity is the gift of God to us, it arises necessarily from the nature and conditions of the Christian religion; where unity is so conspicuous in all its rites and doctrines. We have *one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one spirit* to animate us; *one hope* of our calling: and, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we all partake of *one bread,* and thereby become *one body.* Thus we are called to unity and love, by all the terms of our faith and worship. God hath made us one, as members of his Church: and so far charity is his gift. How it is to be preserved, we are taught at large in the chapter from whence the text is taken. There it appears, that Christians, who are called to a state of unity, are to keep themselves in it, by kindness and long suffering; by bearing with one another's imperfections and weaknesses; by putting away all envy and opposition, all that carnal vanity, which makes us desire to be distinguished in the sight of men, rather than in the favour of God; by bearing with things that may be disagreeable to us; hoping that things are not so bad as they may seem; and that what is bad will be better; by lamenting the offences of our brethren; not rejoicing at their miscarriages: in short, by serving others and reducing ourselves: for thus did the son of man come to take upon him the form of a *servant,* and to *minister* to the wants of all, rather than to be magnified and ministered to by any. He, who can follow this example, will be a charitable man, and shall inherit the rewards of charity, in that blessed place from whence it cometh. His faith may remove mountains; his hope may lift him above the world; but his charity alone will carry him to heaven.

SERMON XIII.

MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER. MATTH. XXI. 13.

About four hundred years ago, when the corruptions of Popery had overspread this kingdom, and were become insupportable, the office of preaching was almost totally neglected in country parishes: and there were indeed but few of the clergy who were qualified to preach, so that the ministerial duty was reduced in a manner to the offices of baptizing, confessing, praying and administering the sacrifice of the mass. Such gross errors were mixed with the doctrines of the church, and so many abuses were practised in the discipline of that time to supply the avarice of the bishop of Rome, and render the priesthood at home a more profitable trade, that it was thought more advisable to keep the common people in ignorance; who were therefore but meanly provided with preachers. But when the eyes of men began to be opened by the remonstrances of the Reformers, the clergy themselves became sensible of the defect, and preaching was again in fashion. As the people grew more enlightened, their inclination to preaching increased, and the clergy found it their interest, as well as their duty, to gratify it, and to adorn their preaching with a proper degree of learning and eloquence.

But such is the weakness of mankind, that they are always prone to correct one error by running into

another. Religion, which in one age had little or no preaching, in the next had scarcely any thing else. Men of seditious inclinations, who were poisoned with foreign prejudices, took advantage of this humour of the people to inflame them against their governors, and turn their hearts from the apostolical constitution of the Church. In the days of Elizabeth, this spirit wrought furiously, but was kept under by authority, and prevented at that time from doing the mischief it meditated. In the next reign, it was reasoning and plotting, but the nation was not enough prepared till the days of Charles the First; when the combustible materials, which had been gradually introduced, and laid up in store for many years past, by artful and insinuating preachers, took fire at last, and spread a flame over the land, which devoured both Church and State, and was visible to all the western parts of Christendom. Then there was nothing but preaching. The ears of all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest, were filled with it. When one preacher had finished his sermon, another got up into the same pulpit, and then another; so that on great days there was no intermission from morning till night. The people, however, awaking at length from the delusion which had seized upon them, and feeling the misery and oppression with which they had been loaded by their new masters, were surfeited with that preaching which had deceived their understandings, and driven them upon their own ruin, instead of leading them to true Christian godliness. They discovered that there was a great difference betwixt *walking with God*, and *talking* with him: the former was the profession of their leaders, but the latter was their practice; and the freedom and sauciness of their language was often

but little short of blasphemy. When there was no preaching, superstition and corruption prevailed; when there was overmuch, it was of a flatulent and inflammatory kind; and it appeared at length so ridiculous, that the style and manner of it was purposely avoided after the Restoration by most men who were regularly educated. But alas! when they did this, they fell into another error, under which we are now suffering. The spirit of prayer and of Christian godliness, having exposed itself in the intemperate and hypocritical effusions of fanatic zeal, was now more coldly affected, and preachers were shy of betraying any symptoms of religious warmth, lest they should be suspected for hypocrites. Interpretations of the Scripture had been made so cheap, and had been so ill managed, that they had given great disgust. The preachers of the former time had made an ostentatious shew of understanding all *mysteries*. They could find the Pope's errors and their own fancies any where in the minor prophets; and could tell you the mystical intention of the snuffers and fire-shovels * of the tabernacle. This evil was corrected by what was called *moral preaching*; and unfortunately for the times, a generation of metaphysicians arose, who gave a new turn to the thoughts of Christian scholars, and furnished them with dry, speculative, unprofitable, and sometimes very dangerous matter. The Old Testament, with which the Puritans had held such ridiculous familiarity, came to be much neglected, and of course much misunderstood; of which I could give some frightful examples from writers of high reputation. Where this happens,

* The celebrated *John Bunyan* wrote a mystical Exposition of every article in Solomon's Temple.

the New Testament can never long maintain its authority; and we are all witnesses, that the neglect of its doctrines by our preachers has offended the common people, and laid them open to the attempts of mercenary enthusiasts, who preach without discretion, and act without authority. Our Dissenters also, are, in general, much departed from their original profession, and, in their discourses, preached and printed, some of them approach nearer to the cold philosophy of Bolingbroke, and the wildness of Voltaire, than to the faith and language of their forefathers: and this I would tell them, not out of any ill-will, but that they may consider from whence they have departed, and learn, that soundness of teaching is always brought into great danger, when we affect separate ways of worship. The duty of a Christian minister requires him therefore to know and to avoid all these dangers; to keep up the knowledge of Christian doctrine in the people, by the light of his preaching; and to warn them at all times of the necessity of praying. We may preach again and again; but unless we can preach till we make men pray, it is all to no purpose. Be ye *doers* of the word, says the Apostle, and *not hearers only*. But how are we to *do* it? Hearing only shews us what it is; the grace of God enables us to perform it; and that grace is never to be obtained, but by prayer. St. *Paul* saw a great light from the heaven which struck him and his companions to the earth; and he heard the voice of Christ himself speaking to him: then he went blind to Damascus, and remained for some time in this dreadful state of suspense, under the hand of God. All this train of miracles was designed only to turn his heart, and bring him to his prayers; and the means, with such an heart to work

upon, had the proper effect. Upon which, Ananias received a commission to go and relieve him—

The Lord said to him, in a vision—

"Arise, and go into the street, which is called "straight, (strait) and inquire in the house of Judas for "one called Saul, of Tarsus, for behold, *he prayeth.*"

The importance and excellence of prayer may be collected from the words of the text; which do not relate to the duty of private devotion, however necessary, but to public prayer only. The house of God does not take its name from the practice of preaching there, but from the practice of praying.—*My house shall be called the House of Prayer.* Accordingly we find, that when the temple of Solomon was finished, it was immediately applied to its proper use. We hear of no preaching on this great occasion, but only of prayers and religious offerings. The king, the priests, and all the people attended at the solemn service of its dedication. Sacrifices were offered without number, and the king in his capacity of a prophet, prayed publicly for the blessing and favour of God upon the house which he had built. His words are very striking, and a part of them will furnish an excellent commentary upon the text. *Will God, indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day. That thine eyes may be opened towards this house night and day; even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken to the prayer which thy servant shall make towards this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and*

of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place, and hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and when thou hearest, forgive. In this part of king Solomon's prayer, these things following are to be observed; 1st. That the temple was an habitation of God; a circumstance which the piety of the king dwells upon with wonder—*will God indeed dwell on earth!* The cloud, which denoted the presence of God, had already filled the house, so that the Priest could not stand to minister: and in the ages after, as well as before, the divine presence was manifested about the ark, and between the cherubims which overshadowed it. On special occasions it appeared in a visible manner, under the symbol of a cloud with a light or glory attending it; and, when the cloud was not seen, the place was always understood as being inhabited in a particular manner by the glory of the God-head.

In the words that follow, the use of the temple is signified—*have thou respect unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day.* This house was the place, where God would give audience, and have respect to the petition, out of regard to the place in which it was offered. They, who expect to be heard, when they address a king, go into his court, and present themselves in a proper place for an audience. The temple is the court of the great King; and though he can hear the voice of men in every place, yet it was expedient, that one place should be honoured above all others, to stir up reverence in men, and give them a reasonable ground of hope, when they should offer their petitions. It seems by the expression, that the people were encouraged not only to pray within the temple, but to have respect to it, and turn themselves toward it in their devotions,

even when they prayed to the God of Israel in distant places—*Hearken to the supplication of thy people Israel, when they shall pray* towards *this place.* And the practice was duly observed by Daniel in his captivity at Babylon; it was his manner to open his window toward Jerusalem, and to kneel, and pray three times a day. His respect was to the temple: and he held to the practice, though there was then no more than the ruins of it remaining. In fact, the tabernacle and temple were the places, where the devotion of the people and the favour of God met together; the house of God was the common assembly of heaven and earth; there God was to be found, and there the people sought him; there *Hannah,* in the bitterness of her soul, offered up her devotions, and her petition was granted. Yea and Christ himself allows, that *the Temple sanctified the gold* which was offered in it; and, if it could sanctify gold, it would rather sanctify the more valuable offerings of prayer and thanksgiving. This was known to that godly woman *Anna,* the prophetess, who, having devoted herself to God, departed not from the temple, but served him there with fastings and prayers night and day. It is not said, that she ran gossipping after sermons, but that she served God with prayers. There the prayers of *Simeon* were granted, and the promise of God fulfilled to him, when he took up the child Jesus in his arms, and blessed God, who in his temple had indulged him with a sight of what his eyes had most desired to behold.

But it is particularly worth our notice, that private devotion seems to have met with the regard of heaven on account of its connection with the services of the temple. It appears from the scripture, that there were settled hours of prayer, when the people resorted

to public worship; such as the third hour of the day, the sixth hour or noontide, the ninth hour, which answered to our three o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun setting when they offered the evening sacrifice. These hours were preferred as the best for private devotion, that the prayer of the closet might be the prayer of charity and uniformity, and ascend to God, with the incense of the church. Peter went up to the house-top to pray at *the sixth hour*, one of the seasons of public devotion at the temple. The prayer of *Cornelius* was answered by a vision from heaven at the *ninth* hour. Daniel confessed his sin and presented his supplication before the Lord about the *time of the evening oblation*, and was then favoured with a revelation from the Angel *Gabriel:* and lastly, on occasion of that great contest of Elijah with the worshippers of Baal, we read, that the prophet waited from the morning till *the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice*, and then put up the prayer which brought down fire from heaven, and determined the dispute. 1 Kings xviii. 36.

These examples shew us plainly, that both God and man have had regard to stated hours of prayer; and that private prayer was most acceptable, when it agreed with the services of the church. In the primitive ages of Christianity, certain *hours* of the day and night were set apart for public and private devotion, that the people of God might be *upon their knees together*, whether in the church or in their own families: and there are still extant the forms of devotion anciently adapted to the hours of prayer, which were put into the *Saxon* language eight hundred years ago, and were probably used in *Latin* some hundreds earlier.

If all ages and nations have shewn so much regard

to the *places* and the times of public worship, and all this reverence was commanded and encouraged by God himself in his dealings with his people, whether Jews or Christians; we shall be disobedient to God, and contrary to good men of all ages, if we neglect the duty of public worship. It hath pleased God in his wisdom to inspire us with reverence for his name, by hallowing some places and things above others: and if God hath regard to what is so set apart for his own honour, we must displease him and injure ourselves, if we do not conform to his institutions; none of which were appointed without a view to our advancement in holiness and happiness. For consider the consequence of uniting in public worship. Does it not serve as a principle of unity, to promote charity among Christians, and bind them in affection to one another? Men, who resort to the same place by choice, that they may pray together, will contract an habit of considering themselves as constantly under the eye of God, and as members of the same family; and with such a relation, they cannot lightly offend or speak evil one of another. And will not every place become happier, in proportion as there is less offence and less evil to set men against one another? If the experiment were to be made, I dare be answerable for it, that the happiness of every society would be found to keep equal pace with their devotion. Where there is no prayer, there is no religion; and where there is no religion, there is no peace; but instead of it the blusterings of pride, the cruelty of malice, the oppressiveness of avarice, the rage of blasphemy, slander, and evil speaking. When Abraham sojourned in a land where the true God was either unknown or disregarded, he said within himself, *the fear of God is not in this place;* and accord-

ingly he looked for nothing but injury and violence. Where the public is corrupt, private happiness must always be affected by it; and we know of no remedy for public corruption but public devotion.

There is only one thing farther that need now be observed in behalf of public prayer, which is this; that the devotion of heaven is the devotion of *society*. Angels and saints all join in the adoration of the same Divine Being: there are no monastics, no professors of retirement; but they are all of the same heart and mind, praising God with one voice, and inflaming the rapture of every individual by the powerful union of an infinite multitude. Men united together in great numbers have a powerful influence on one another's passions here upon earth; how much more will the multitudes of immortal spirits in heaven spread abroad the flames of divine love in the hearts of those who shall be blessed with their society? This consideration should draw Christians together; whose chief duty it is now, to join their voices together in charity, and make intercession to God for the forgiveness of their own sins, and of the church and nation to which they belong: that so they may be prepared to meet in heaven, and join in the worship of the church triumphant; where intercession shall be changed to thanksgiving; where there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no sin; where the devotion of the day shall not be interrupted by the darkness of the night; and where the God, whom they worship, shall no longer be an invisible object of their faith, but present to their sight in glory everlasting.

Thus far I have endeavoured to justify and recommend the public worship of God. I have warned you of the corruptions of popery on the one hand.

and of the error of the sectaries on the other; who in a manner excluded the charitable duties of prayer, to make room for vain and seditious discourses from the pulpit. I have insisted according to the words of the text that the house of God is a place intended for the office of *prayer*, the proper employment of poor sinners, who may hear sermons all their lives, but will never find themselves nearer to God, till they know how to taste the pleasures of devotion. All the sacrifices which were offered from the beginning of the world, all the incense of the tabernacle, all the smoke of the altar, did not minister to the work of preaching, but were the vehicles of prayer, intercession, and atonement. Prayer ever was, and ever will be, the vital part of religion: without it there is no religion; and with it, the person who has only learned his catechism, may with God's blessing find his way to heaven, with little or no assistance from sermons. I have likewise observed, that public prayer borrows its efficacy from the *place* in which it is offered; a place separated from common use, and holding communication with heaven itself, the dwelling-place of God; that the servants of God in all ages had a reverend esteem for the *place* of divine worship; having regard to it always in the manner and the time of their private devotions: and that God hath shewed special favour to those who applied to him at the appointed *time;* that the great *end* of all these appointments is the edification and happiness of the people of God, who are knit together in charity, by uniting in prayer; that public blessings are the sure reward of public devotion; and that individuals cannot be at peace, unless there is religion in the society to which they belong. Above all, that the devotion of the congregation upon earth is preparatory to the felicity

of heaven; and that he must pray with Christians in this vale of tears, who would join in the worship of angels in the sanctuary above. Surely these were the considerations which possessed the heart of the holy Psalmist, when he uttered those sublime expressions of charity and devotion, the hearing of which is sufficient to warm the coldest heart. *I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord—Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself; for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord—O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee—for my brethren and companions' sakes I will wish thee prosperity; yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.*

And now, my brethren, give me leave to inform you, that I have chosen this particular subject, because the season of Lent is at hand, and our case is particular. You all know it was my practice, when I came first to this place, to have weekly prayers at the church: but my congregation, which was always small, did at length fall away so, that I was discouraged from proceeding any farther. This was the first accident I had ever met with of the kind since I entered into the ministry; which made it the more grievous to me. However, I will not give up a good cause in despair; and that the fault may not lie upon myself, I have determined to speak my mind freely, having some encouragement so to do. You were slack in sending your children to be catechised: but when I spoke to you upon that subject in the church, I found an immediate attention for the better: who knows, but that what I shall now say may be attended with the like happy effect? At least I am per-

suaded you will do me the justice to believe, that, your benefit is the principle object I have in view. Therefore let us consider the case fairly and impartially. I know the excuse you have to offer for not attending the prayers of the church on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*—you are *busy*, and have not *time*.—And indeed, I must admit this excuse as sufficient with those whose employment or situation places them at a great distance from the church, and whose families depend upon their daily labour: therefore I must argue the case more particularly with those who are *near the church*. To them I answer, that the time of their attendance is *short*; not much more than half an hour twice in a week; and that this little portion of time cannot occasion any very great interruption in their affairs. Let them ask their own hearts seriously, whether they would not be prevailed upon to spare *twice as much time*, on *any* day in the week, upon motives of curiosity or vanity? And is the favour of God so light a matter? Will they always think, that a trifling visit, or an empty sight, is rather to be sought than the pardon of their sins, and the blessing of heaven? Will they think so in the hour of death, or the day of judgment? If they dare not insist upon such excuses then, in the presence of God, why should they depend upon them now.

But let me suppose charitably, that they are persuaded in their own minds, that the *business* of their calling is the *first thing* required of them; that the worship of God ought to give way to it; and that their diligence will turn to a better account than their devotion: if this is their reckoning, they will find on farther consideration, that it is very ill grounded. For man in this life is never independent of God; he doth not work alone; but God worketh with him in

every thing that is good and lawful. If he conforms himself to the will of God, his work will be more likely to prosper, than if he consulteth himself only. If the wisdom of the earth is not tempered and regulated by the wisdom of heaven, it will at last find itself disappointed. And however strange this may seem to a man, who at the week's end thinks himself well able to reckon up all the profit of his labour; yet I can tell him of a much stranger thing, which is undoubtedly true upon Christian principles, though it sounds like a contradiction—*He that saveth his life shall lose it*—He that saveth his life against the will of God, shall lose it against his own will; or, he shall save for awhile the life of his body, and lose for ever the life of his soul. May it not well be said then, *he that saveth his time shall lose it?* He shall be out in his reckoning; his time, by some unforeseen interruptions and miscarriages, shall be rendered less profitable than he expects: or, he shall lose the grace of God by preferring a very inconsiderable reward of a very small portion of his labour: whereas, he, who will bestow some of his time upon God, shall see the remainder sanctified, and find that he has enough and to spare for all other purposes. It is an old proverb that the *wealth honestly gotten goes far:* and it is equally true, that the time which hath God's blessing upon it shall be much increased in its value. Providence hath many ways of disappointing worldly men in their calculations. A fit of sickness may confine them much longer against their will, and much more to the hurt of their temporal affairs, than a regular attendance for several years upon the hours of prayer. When the Jews were become carnal, they reasoned as Pharaoh did before: who said, *Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, let us go and do service to the Lord our*

God. So they argued that the time spent in divine worship was just so much time lost to themselves and their affairs. But God shewed them the folly of this reasoning: he led them into captivity, where they had no church, but sighed and lamented for the want of one, saying, *how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* Their sabbaths and festivals had been neglected on motives of worldly profit: therefore so much time as they had stolen from God, so much and more did he cut off in judgment from the enjoyment of liberty and property in their own land: and I make no doubt but this is the reason why many are not blessed in their property, and find unexpected miscarriage in their affairs; which might have been prevented, had they but *lifted up their eyes unto the hills,* and considered themselves rather as the *servants of God,* than the *masters of their own time.*

I hope you will consider these things, that *the house of God is the house of prayer*—that you may *lose* your time by *saving* it—and that for a little time well spent you may purchase the blessing of God here, and the riches of eternity hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVI.

THEN SAID JESUS UNTO HIS DISCIPLES; IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME. MATTH. XVI. 24.

Our blessed Saviour, in these words, hath proposed himself to us, as *the captain of our Salvation, made perfect through sufferings.* And he, that wishes to *come after* him, must consider himself as the follower of a self-denying, suffering Saviour; a disciple, whose profession is signified by the sign of the Cross; to which his whole character must be conformed, till the cross shall be exchanged for the crown.

But here you are to observe, that there is no necessity imposed, no compulsion; a proposal is made, which it is in our power to reject, if we are so disposed. It is only said, if *any man is willing* *, if he *chooses* to follow Christ, these are the conditions of so doing; he must *deny himself;* he must *take up his cross.* The profession of a Christian is a service of choice: he must not follow Christ, as malefactors follow the officers of justice, because they cannot avoid it; but as one who seeks the rewards and blessings of the Christian profession; and having set down to consider the cost, determines to take it upon him, with all its present disadvantages. With this spirit and

* Ει τις θελει.

temper Christianity was professed by those saints and martyrs, who *endured unto the end,* and triumphed over all the enemies of our salvation. But now the whole doctrine of self-denial is dismissed with a high hand, as fit only for weak women, solitary monks, or deluded enthusiasts. And, I am sorry to say it, there are too many in the church, who, although they ought to know better, because it is their calling to teach better, are yet so ignorant, or so mistaken, as to congratulate themselves on the established lawfulness of ease, pleasure and self-indulgence, as a great and very happy improvement of the Protestant Reformation: and they think we are fallen into blessed times, now the calendar of a wise man has no fasting days in it. But this opinion is not only false in itself, injurious to Christianity, and a fatal snare upon Christian people; but contrary also to the common sense of the whole world. I will appeal to all mankind, whether it is not their general practice to suffer pain willingly, for the sake of future profit?—Whether they do not, by their own choice deny themselves, and part with what they value, to obtain what they hope for? How then can he be thought to have the hope of the gospel in him, who will neither abstain from any present good, nor bear any present evil, for the sake of it? The Christian hath nothing in his power, whereby to testify the sincerity of his hope, but abstinence and patience: and he, who refuses to give this proof, can never be thought to set much value on *the prize of the high calling that is set before him.*

If we observe mankind in their several pursuits, we shall find, that they never seek a prize, without submitting to some hardships in obtaining it. For what they expect in future they give up present ease and pleasure; and there are few examples, where future

enjoyment does not depend upon present self-denial. *He that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.* The champions, who were candidates for the victory in any trials of skill, prepared themselves by laborious exercise; abstaining also from every gratification, which might reduce their strength, abate their courage, or lessen their activity; and cheerfully exposing themselves to all that severity of discipline, which was necessary to insure the victory. *Now they did it,* as the Apostle notes, *to obtain a corruptible crown;* while we strive to obtain an *incorruptible* one, a crown of glory which *fadeth not away,* as those temporary garlands of herbs and flowers did, which were given to victors in the heathen sports. The merchant leaves his native climate, his relations, his friends, his family, his domestic comforts, to traverse the wide ocean at the hazard of his life; and is content to be scorched with heat in the Indies, or frozen with cold in the northern regions. The soldier, for honour and promotion, endures the fatigues of a campaign, the discipline of a camp, and the dangers of a battle. The heir, who expects an inheritance, accommodates himself, perhaps for many years, to the humours of a capricious and imperious testator. The physician, for reputation and for profit, is hurried abroad by day, and deprived of his rest by night, without leisure to follow his favourite studies, or enjoy the comforts of life; and finds most trouble when the years, which have added to his wisdom and experience, have made him less able to endure the fatigues of his profession. Fair weather is agreeable and delightful: it pleases the eye, and it cheers the mind: but the husbandman knows, that perpetual sun-shine must end in poverty, and drought, and famine, and pestilential diseases; and that cloudy days, and weeping skies are abso-

lutely necessary to a plentiful harvest. *He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.* The labourer, for his hire, submits to daily confinement; and the scholar, for the enjoyment and advantages of learning, loses his rest, impairs his eyesight, and injures his health. In a word, all mankind, who are rationally employed, are denying themselves, with the prospect of some future advantage. All the world is doing what some Christians, who think they see farther than the rest, refuse to do; who *professing* themselves *to be wise*, forfeit their title to common sense. The Christian profession would be unlike all others, if its rewards were to be thrown away upon the folly of impatience, the stupidity of idleness, the unprofitableness of pleasure and self-indulgence. As its prize is the richest, it has a right to require a longer probation of us, and to put us upon a severer trial.

And let me here add, that he who does not deny himself on motives of piety and prudence, shall be no gainer, even according to his own sense of things. It is a poor bargain, by which we gain the pleasures of a swine, and lose the pleasures of a man. Self-indulgence not only unfits a man for every great and useful employment, (as the swine is the most useless creature living); but passions unmortified and headstrong will be sure to create many and great troubles; so that a man's vices shall bring him under a discipline far more severe than that which purifies the heart of a Christian and prepares him for eternity. Think how many are now sick, who might have been well; how many are poor, who might have been rich; how many are dead, who might have been alive; how many are in prison, who might

have been as free as we are! to all these the precept in the text—*let him deny himself*—would have acted as a grand preservative, and secured to them their health, their wealth, their life, their liberty. Some of the purest philosophers among the heathens, who saw by experience how great a thing it is for man to be delivered from the fatal effects of his own appetites, called a state of temperance, and self-denial, a state of *salvation* *.

How happy is it, therefore, for us, that the duty, which prudence should take up of choice, is imposed upon us of necessity, as we are Christians, that is, followers of Jesus Christ in principle and practice; who, *for the glory that was set before him*, preferred a life of self-denial, which ended in the sufferings of the cross!

Before he entered on the great work of his ministry, he retired into the wilderness, to prepare himself by a fast of forty days. He was there separated from the conversation of his friends, and from the common supports of life; the world, and all its enjoyments, were left behind: the ground was his bed, and the beasts of the desert were his companions. And when hunger prevailed most, after such severe abstinence, he yielded not to the plausible arguments of the Tempter for the supplying of his wants. And, indeed, it was a frequent custom with him to retire into solitary places, by day and by night, to exercise himself in fasting, prayer, and holy meditation.

With regard to his condition upon earth, he avoided every appearance of greatness, and took upon him the *form of a servant*. He was born in a stable; he

* Ουτω γαρ μονον ο τουτος ΣΩΘΕΙΗ. *Xen.* Memor. Socrat. lib. i. c. 5.

Δεικνυει τοιαν οδον αυτος δει βαδιζειν, ει ΣΩΖΕΣΘΑΙ μελλουσιν εν τω βιω. Cebes in Tabulâ.

laboured in a low occupation; when he provided for the wants of others, he was himself more unprovided than the birds of the air, or the foxes of the earth. The garment, which he chose to wear constantly, was *without seam, woven from the top throughout;* and therefore could admit of nothing that was curious or elegant in the form of it.—And, who was it, that thus made himself of no reputation? It was the Son of God, who could not be looked upon by mortal eyes, till he had *emptied himself of his glory.* It was the Creator of the world, who made himself inconsiderable and poor, and possessed nothing in that world, which himself had made. When the Jews would have taken him by force, to make him a king, he concealed himself from their sight: and when the world, with all its grandeur and empire, was offered to him, he renounced it all; preferring the glory of God, and putting off his own exaltation, till the way of self-denial and suffering should lead him up to it.

The sufferings of the Christian are emphatically called in the text, *taking up his Cross.* The Gospel informs us, that this was done by our Saviour, in his way to his crucifixion. A circumstance, which shews that his sufferings were voluntary. He took up this burthen, when he might have called for twelve legions of angels; and he submitted freely to all the sorrows which attended it. The Cross was the instrument of his death: but the word includes all the circumstances of sorrow belonging to it. He, who took up his cross, took the pain, the shame, and the grief of it; all the persecution, which preceded, and all the agony which followed, till the moment in which he gave up the Ghost.

I believe I shall speak a great truth, if I affirm that

there never was any kind of pain, mortification, grief, or sorrow, felt by mortal man, in mind, body or spirit, which the Son of God did not feel, at some period of his passion, when he suffered for our sins: he bore *our griefs*, when he was visited for *our iniquities:* all the sorrows of a sinful world were assembled together in his single person; and others were added, which were peculiar to himself—felt by him, but never to be known by us. The sum of his sufferings is an abyss, which we cannot fathom. Men may hear of it, and coldly regard it; but principalities and powers stand abashed at it.

Such was the example set before us by the great Captain of our salvation; who denied himself in his life, and took up the cross at his death; that we, his followers and soldiers, might be encouraged to undertake and endure all the hardships and dangers of our militant state here upon earth. *Let the same mind*, then, *be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus*, who humbled himself, that he might be exalted, and became obedient unto death, that every knee might bow at his name. Take it as we will, the followers of Christ can find no other way to glory and happiness, but this of self-denial and patient suffering.

Our self-denial, as in the case of our blessed Master, must extend to our minds, our bodies, and our estates. In our minds, we are, first, to conform ourselves to the *will* of God; and, secondly, to be obedient to the *law* of God. The hardest of all Christian duties is that of resignation: no trial is like that of contradicting our own stubborn wills. Every man has a plan of his own, in which he has proposed to himself some objects which will make him happy; and without which, he concludes it impossible for him to be so. It pleases God so to order events, as to dis-

appoint him, and force his thoughts into some other channel: then, if he believes that all events are directed by God's providence, he will give up his own schemes, and conclude *that* to be best, which God ordains; though it may not at present appear to be so. It is the proper act of faith to look forward to things invisible, and to see future good through present evil. Miserable is the man, who sets up his own will against that power which governs the world, and has promised to make *all things work together for good in the end to those that love him.*

In his body, he is to deny himself by mortification and abstinence, as his Saviour did; without which, the will and the appetites can never be reduced to order. There is something remarkable in the words, where Christ gives instruction how to cast out devils: *this kind,* saith he, *goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.* The rule extends to every thing of that *kind,* whether evil spirits, or evil passions, which possess men to their destruction: all are to be cast out by prayer and fasting, and not without it. All men, by nature, are possessed with evil passions, which agitate and torment them; driving them to extravagance, outrage, despair, madness, and even death itself. All that an evil spirit could do, a man's own unmortified passions will do, to destroy him. And how are these enemies to be cast out? Will reason conquer them? No: let the body be indulged, and reason will soon be blinded and baffled. Even religion itself, with all its motives, will not avail, without positive mortification. So salutary is the habit of self-denial, and so necessary to man in his present situation, that he should deny himself even in the smallest things, that the habit may extend to things of greater consequence. And there is a refined plea-

sure in this conquest of the mind over the body, which the voluptuary neither knows, nor understands; and which, indeed, very few, in this age of professed self-indulgence, can relish or receive. I may add too, that the Christian religion, while it seems, in this doctrine, only to keep us down and punish us for our sins, does really admonish us for our safety, and consult our present happiness. For this practice of self-denial is conducive to health, peace and godliness; the only true riches on this side the grave. So that, upon the terms of Christianity, we gain more than we lose even in this world.

In his worldly estate, the follower of Christ must deny himself in what relates to his outward appearance and conversation with the world. It is our great misfortune, early in life, when we have little or no judgment, to be cheated with false ideas of pleasure and greatness, and a fanciful notion of our own importance. To himself, every man, on some principle or other, is the first personage in the world; and it is the labour of some people's lives to keep up and secure this visionary idea of their own importance. They affect distinction and superiority; and there is nothing they are so much afraid of upon earth, as of losing it, or seeming to lose it, in the eyes of other people. To prevent which, they study all the little artifices of pride; and often flatter their own vanity, by meanly transgressing the rules of common sense, and exposing the littleness of their minds to contempt and ridicule. So long as this temper has possession, how is it possible to be a follower of that Master, who, though the richest upon earth, threw off all superiority, and made himself poor and of no reputation, for our sakes? The children of the world are eagerly

running into higher company, to borrow some consequence, which does not belong to them: but he associated with fishermen, and preferred the company and conversation of an obscure, godly family in Bethany: he chose the little things of this world to confound the great, and foolish things to confound the wise. But alas! Look at those who are called by his name, and see what stirring there is for precedence: What mean, servile endeavours, to procure honour from men, even from people of no judgment; while they neglect the only true honour which cometh from God: who hath far other notions of greatness and importance than those which the fashion of this world hath introduced and established.

And now, having considered the doctrine of self-denial, so far as the time will permit, I have only farther to observe, that the follower of Christ must be ready to imitate his Master in *taking up the Cross*: and we may assure ourselves, that the divine providence, with a fatherly attention, never fails to correct those of whose reformation there is any hope. Some, indeed, are left to themselves, little interrupted in the enjoyment of the world: *They come into no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men.* God deliver us from being of that number! For such an exemption, while it seems to be a privilege, is the greatest curse under heaven. Let no good man ever wish to have his portion in this life on the terms of the rich man in the Gospel. Besides this, the best and the wisest have their sins and their follies, which nothing but their own sufferings can cure; and as the Cross of Christ was the remedy for the sins of the world, so every individual must take that Cross from the appointment of God, which

is adapted to his own particular case. As the occasion may require, we are visited with bodily pain and sickness, loss of wealth or reputation, unmerited neglect and dishonour, inconstancy of friends, who often stand at a distance, and are least useful, when they are most wanted. And when God pleases even the refreshments and comforts of the divine presence are withdrawn: the saint complains, like his Saviour on the Cross, that his *God hath forsaken him.* Such things are necessary for a time, to make us sensible of our own weakness and misery; to punish our past unprofitableness under the means of grace; and to mortify those who have neglected to mortify themselves.

The Cross of Christ was fore-ordained of God, with infinite wisdom, as the proper instrument of his death: and with the like wisdom he appoints the Cross, by which every particular man is to suffer. The precept directs every one to take up *his* Cross; not the trouble of another man, but that, which is sent for his own trial, and adapted to his own case. The God, who made him, knows his wants and his feelings, and applies the trial to the proper part.—Monastics may whip and scourge themselves, and wear horse-hair garments to afflict their skin: but these are crosses of their own making. The question is, whether a man will take in Faith and Patience, as absolutely necessary to his own good, *that* Cross, which God's wisdom hath ordained for him, and laid upon him. How common is it for people to complain, that they could have borne any thing else but that present evil under which they are suffering! God knew that, and therefore he sent it; to punish their sin; to teach them patience; and to make them fly to him for help and support under

the pressing sense of their own weakness. Here our faith is to resign itself, and to say, with the afflicted king Hezekiah,—*O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live!*

SERMON XV.

LEST, BEING LIFTED UP WITH PRIDE, HE FALL INTO THE CONDEMNATION OF THE DEVIL. 1 TIM. iii. 6.

CONVERTS of little experience in the Christian Faith were disposed to be vain, when they were exalted above their brethren: and as vanity never fails to weaken the judgment, and put men out of humour with truth, error in doctrine soon follows, when pride has got possession of the imagination. The Tempter defrauds men of truth, as the artful defraud the simple of their money, by flattering them, and suggesting great ideas of their talents and qualifications.

By the *condemnation of the devil,* in the words of the text, so far as men can *fall into* it in this life, we must understand that kind of sin, for which the devil himself is under sentence of condemnation. In the prophecy of Isaiah, his crime is specified, as an aspiring to be equal with God. Amongst other presumptuous expressions to the same effect, he said in his heart, *I will be like the Most High.* He suggested the same presumptuous thought to our first parents, tempting them to expect that they might *be like Gods, knowing good and evil.* The good of the understanding is truth; its evil is falsehood; and if so they were tempted to seek the knowledge of good and evil, that is, of truth and falsehood, independent of God; consequently, in opposition to him. The desire of that independence, by which the creature becomes a law

to himself against the Creator, was the root of sin in Lucifer: he tried the same temptation upon man, and it succeeded. It hath prevailed ever since, and will prevail to the end of the world. What was the whole religion of paganism, but a system of faith and worship invented by those who did not *like to retain God in their knowledge;* they *became vain in their imaginations,* and *their foolish heart was darkened.* They became *fools,* by *professing themselves to be wise;* and knew nothing of divine things, by pretending to have a source of knowledge within themselves. Whence came all the heresies that infested the Christian church? Not so much from any obscurity in the Gospel, as from the vain reasonings of those, who were too proud to receive it: *If any man* (says the Apostle) *teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing.* If we look to the present age, whence comes all the modern opposition against the doctrines of Christianity, but from human philosophy, judging of good and evil by its own light, and proposing new sources of information, with new principles, new duties, and new obligations?

From this view of the text, it offers a very important fact to our consideration: namely, that there is a peculiar sort of wickedness, in which man may be a partaker with the devil. And if so, it is of infinite consequence that we should define it clearly, and explain it in such a manner as to guard our hearers against it: especially as there is a dangerous mistake gone abroad amongst us, and of which the enemies of our faith are always prepared to take advantage. It has been very falsely supposed, that people may secure to themselves the favour of God, and be in a

state of salvation, if they do but observe moral honesty in their words and actions. Some through art, and others through ignorance, flatter men in this error; assuring them, that if they do but lead good lives, all articles of faith are no more than matters of opinion, and they need not trouble themselves about their creed. To correct this error and demonstrate the malignity of it, is the principal object of this discourse. In order to which, it is obvious, as a first argument, that as a good life is the fruit of a good faith, it can no more grow from a wrong belief, than grapes can grow upon thistles. To every seed the Creator gives its own proper body; whatever we sow, the same we shall reap; and therefore it must be a strange unnatural philosophy which expects to gather the fruit of Christian godliness from the seeds of infidelity.

Then again, it is manifest that *a good life* is an ambiguous expression, the vulgar use of which betrays great ignorance in those who confine it to the practice of social duties. For the Christian *life*, properly so called, comprehends two great branches of duty; the first towards God, the second, towards our neighbour. God has an undoubted claim to the first place; our neighbour has the next. In regard to the latter, we have a plain rule to direct us: we do well, if we treat our neighbour as we wish to be treated by him. But then what are we to do in respect to God? Here the rule fails us; for we cannot do to God as he doth to us; we have nothing to give him, but obedience and resignation to his will. It is he that must approve and reward us for our duty toward our neighbour; and it would be presumptuous to expect, that he will reward those, who put an immediate affront upon himself. If we look to the positive rule of our

duty in the ten commandments, we find that the four first relate immediately to God himself: the others relate to our neighbour; and if we should observe the latter, to the neglect, and perhaps the contempt, of the former, and yet be thought to lead *good lives*; then we may deny the true God, worship idols, take God's name in vain, profane the sabbath, and commit many other dreadful crimes, and after all, expect to be rewarded by God Almighty for leading a *good life*. But this is a supposition too shocking to be admitted by any but those, who are either desperately ignorant or desperately wicked. If we fail in the principal part of our duty, and offend against God himself, how can we expect his blessing for what we do to any body else? Will some little acts of kindness to a fellow subject authorise us to commit an act of rebellion? Because we have given a dinner to a beggar, are we to be pardoned by the king for committing treason? The case is the same betwixt man and God. Will he permit us to neglect his worship, and put a slight upon his holy religion, because we are just good enough to escape the penal laws of our country, and do a little service to our neighbour? No man can believe this, till he is under some strong delusion.

The malignity of spiritual wickedness will be evident from the fall of our first parents, and from the moral character of the devil himself.

The first offence, which brought death into the world, was not an offence against society; for there was none. It was not a sin of one man against another, but only against a positive command of God. It was revealed, that the forbidden tree would have a fatal effect: this revelation was disputed; the truth of God was suspected; the lust of pride prevailed:

and the sentence of death followed. If Adam, then destroyed himself and the world, by sinning against the word of God, certainly any particular man may ruin himself after the same example; even though he should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned for the benefit of his country.

All will be ready to grant, that no wickedness can be worse than the wickedness of the devil: but let them consider of what kind it is: he is no member of society; and being a *spirit*, he cannot commit the sins of *the body*: he is no *glutton*, no *drunkard*, no *miser*, no *adulterer*: his wickedness is entirely of a *spiritual nature*; in other words, it is not the wickedness of the *body*, but of the *spirit*. It consists in opposing the wisdom of God; perverting his word; accusing his justice; despising his mercy; suggesting evil thoughts to men; promoting heresies and schisms; in dividing the Christian church; and disturbing the kingdoms of the world: in a word, it is the peculiar business of the apostate spirit, to defeat the gracious purposes of the Divine Spirit, by all the efforts of *falsehood*, *subtilty*, *pride*, *malice* and *contradiction*. The whole dispute between the Saviour and the destroyer is a war of spirits; and carnal men are miserably blind and ignorant when they make no account of it: especially when it is considered, that they themselves, as spirits, must be engaged on one side or the other.

The character most acceptable, because most useful to the grand deceiver, is that which comes nearest to his own: and for the forming of such a character, he employs the most refined of his temptations. The stupid sot, the profane swearer, the distempered sensualist, are mean examples of vice, the lowest of the devil's adherents; who are sometimes weary of the burden of their sins; and being self-condemned, are

driven by remorse to the amendment of their lives: but the speculative and philosophical sinner is a man of figure; whose pride will never admit of his reformation. The Scribes and Pharisees, conceited of their false logic, could always find some way to make the word of God of no effect; and so remained incorrigible in their errors: while the Publican was prevailed upon to renounce his extortion, and the Harlot to wash away her stains with the tears of repentance. The sinner who errs upon *principle*, and whose *mind* is in fault, not only *departs* from the will of God, but *opposes* it: *meaner* sinners *transgress* the law; but he *judges* it, and *sets himself above it.*

Such is the case of those, who, being wise in their own conceit, *are lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* He whose fall is to be great *must* first be *lifted up*; he must be carried aloft, above other men, and then his fall will be his destruction. Thus did the tempter place our Saviour on high, upon a pinnacle of the temple, that he might claim an unwarrantable exemption from danger, and cast himself into the air, to meet that ruin which is the consequence of presumption.

But the spirit of man is not exposed to any danger, of which the scripture hath not given us fair warning. We are told, that we are under the peril of being overcome in our Christian warfare by *spiritual wickedness in high places;* (Eph. vi. 12.) that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;* that our *imaginations* are to be *cast down,* our *thoughts* to be *brought into captivity;* as a proud enemy is led in triumph after the chariot of a conqueror: that Satan hath his *depths,* his *mysteries of iniquity,* as well as his more gross and shallow deceits; that he has agents to recommend his principles, and bring them into vogue; who are

called *false apostles, deceitful workers,* manufacturers of fraud; transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and preaching down the Gospel, under the plausible pretence of *improving* it, and correcting *popular mistakes.*

These notices ought to alarm us; yet there are few Christians who attend properly to them in this age; and therefore the work of every deceiver is easier now than it used to be. There are a set of fashionable phrases in religion, such as *speculative doctrines, liberty of opinion,* the *moral sense, right of private judgment,* with other novel and refined notions, by which the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity are overborne and superseded: and these have been repeated, till some have nearly lost the idea of *impiety,* and can see no wickedness in the nation, but such as is condemned in a common court of justice. It is true, the thief, the murderer, the adulterer, will all appear before the tribunal of Christ; but then, the heretic, the idolater, the blasphemer, the sabbath-breaker will be there too: and they will then discover, that what they call moral honesty, however excellent in its proper place, will be no excuse for despising articles of faith, and neglecting the ordinances of the gospel. Immorality is bad enough, and will undoubtedly exclude men from the kingdom of heaven: but *contumacy* is worse; because it strikes at the *authority* of God. Sensuality places man among the *beasts;* but infidelity gives him an alliance with *evil spirits.* The mind is better than the body in itself; and consequently, according to an established proverb, worse in its corruption. No obedience can be acceptable to God, without that which is best of all, and first in order, the obedience of the understanding: no courage is so valuable, as that which

contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; no temperance so excellent, as that which refrains from high thoughts and presumptuous imaginations. As the *thoughts* are the principles of action, and all vice and virtue begins in the *heart*; the scripture, for a natural reason, hath insisted so particularly on the obedience of the mind, and an humble reception of truth. A sound faith is the seed of a virtuous life; but if there is bitterness in the root, it will extend itself to the branches; and to a discerning palate every leaf will taste of it. All bad principles and irreligious opinions partake of the nature of the place from whence they come; they are not the seeds of grain or of fruit; but the seeds of *fire*; which from a small spark diffuse themselves abroad into a wide and destructive flame. How short is this proposition—*man may know good and evil independent of God!* It is a mere spark: yet this has filled the world with misery, ignorance, idolatry and atheism: it is the compendium of all heresy, and of all infidelity.

The nature of the subject requires us now to take a short review of the *artifices* which are employed to draw men into spiritual wickedness. The first and chief of these is to inflate the mind with a false opinion of its own natural powers. He, who undertakes to persuade us, that a man has a native *light* by which he can *know*, and a *power* by which he can *do*, the will of God, understands the consequences of his success: he knows, that if we follow him thus far, we shall be prepared to receive the rest of his opinions. Few have written against the Christian doctrines, at least in modern times, who have not first endeavoured to make the mind conceited of its own powers. He, that publishes to corrupted nature the pleasing doctrines of *natural liberty*, *independence*, and the *self-*

sufficiency of the human *mind*, will never want an audience. Pride and indolence will always be glad to hear, that nothing is required of them, on questions of the highest importance in religion, but to look inwards, and consult their own opinions. The private judgment of an individual, rash and inexperienced as it may be, has been allowed to be conclusive against the laws and regulations of society: whence vanity will readily infer, that a private person cannot do justice to his own wisdom, till he contradicts the judgment of the public, and strikes into some by-path of his own.

It has been asserted on the same ground, that no man can fall into condemnation for the errors of his faith; because sincerity in falsehood will be as acceptable to God as truth itself. But might we not as well say, that poison will answer all the purposes of wholesome food, provided it be eaten with a good appetite? Or that darkness may be substituted for light; and that men may direct their steps by one as well as by the other? If this principle is true, the priest of Baal may find a place in heaven, and Jesus Christ need not have come into the world.

Another way of recommending dangerous opinions is to magnify the authors and abettors of them, as persons of superior knowledge, and great worth, profound scholars, and acute reasoners. They are applauded also, yea, they applaud themselves, for the excellence of their temper, their universal candour and benevolence. While honest men are apt to betray the emotions of their indignation, the enemies of their faith prevail upon themselves to practise a sort of political patience, which suppresses it own passions to take advantage of the passions of other men. This patience has nothing of religion in it; but may rather

be considered as a kind of *anti-christian mortification*; a black virtue of a counterfeit angel of light. With this however, they impose upon the unwary, who are not able to see through specious appearances. They affect to breathe nothing but peace and gentleness; they leave all others to think as they please, and desire nothing but that freedom of thought which they allow to other people. And who can deny to such accomplished gentlemen, the liberty of insulting all articles of faith, blaspheming the scriptures, defaming the Christian church, and corrupting the morals of Christian people, by undermining the very foundations of morality? especially when it is considered on the other hand, that piety and orthodoxy have nothing to uphold their credit in the world, but the arbitrary *authority*, and *persecuting* spirit of some men, working upon the *folly* and *credulity* of others: that all the refinements of learning are on one side; bigotry, superstition and ignorance on the other: that all the worst men are with the church, and all the best are against it.

A farther artifice of those who attempt to subvert the faith of their readers, is to pretend a sacred regard to *truth*, and a laudable desire to rescue the minds of their brethren from error and *imposition*. A man, who comes to make an impudent attack upon all the distinguishing articles of Christianity, introduces himself to us as a *sincere lover of the gospel*. He dare not leave his readers to find that out by the perusal of his work; but hopes they will be blind to the mischief of it, when they have conceived a fair opinion of the spirit and candour of the writer. This outward appearance of meekness and charity has always been assumed by those who have had ill designs against

the flock of Christ. Disguise is necessary to the success of every impostor; insomuch that our blessed Saviour hath given it as the characteristic of a false prophet—*Beware*, said he, *of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* To secure themselves under their disguise, they caution us largely against censoriousness: they can bear every thing but censure and detection, which they call *uncharitableness.* We can never offend a thief so much as by following him with a candle, to shew people what he is about: but no good man will fear to give such offence: he will rather wish to be called censorious by those whom it is the duty of every true Christian to censure.

And now, if the Nature of Spiritual Wickedness is as I have represented it; (I hope without aggravation or partiality) our * office, as ministers of the Gospel, calls upon us to provide against it, by alarming the careless, by rescuing, as far as we are able, those who have been ensnared by the sophistry of the adversary; and by securing those who are as yet uncorrupted. The oracles of God having been committed to us, our duty is to contend earnestly for the faith therein contained, that the people may not be defrauded of that light which God hath intrusted with us, for the guiding of their feet into the way of peace: in this great and necessary branch of our ministry, we are to avoid the two extremes of petulance and fearfulness: we must neither betray the cause, nor expose ourselves. When we see men obstinately shutting their eyes against the clear light of truth, and industriously leading others aside into darkness, our indignation will be raised: but we are so to be *angry* in this case

* This Discourse was preached before the Clergy, at an Episcopal Visitation.

as not to *sin:* and, on the other hand, when we are moderating our zeal, we must take care not to carry our civility so far, as *to give place to the devil,* who deserves neither precedence nor courtesy at our hands. Some are so addicted to censure, that they see sin every where; others are so indifferent towards evil, that they see it no where. For them, evil men and evil spirits may go on as they please without any interruption.

Christians, who from ignorance or the prejudice of education have their doubts, and wish for information and satisfaction, are to be treated with civility and tenderness: but infidelity deserves no quarter. No praises will ever be due to the learning or abilities of those, who pervert their talents to the everlasting destruction of mankind.

When we endeavour to secure the mind from corruption, prudence will direct us to choose the fittest season. First impressions of every kind are strongest; and therefore we must begin soon enough: we must sow the seeds of true religion, before the ill weeds of vanity and falsehood have got possession. The importance of early instruction, and the efficacy of catechetical forms, simply explained, is greater than any words can describe. Many, when they come to riper years, are carried about with every wind of doctrine, for want of timely instruction to keep them steady, and defend them from the deceits of enthusiasm, which have a dreadful effect on the interests of truth and piety. When a reprobate, who never had any regular foundation of Christian knowledge, changes all of a sudden into an Apostle (a phænomenon not altogether unknown in these days) he may boast that his *heart* is *turned;* but melancholy experience teaches us, that his *head* is too frequently turned along with it.

Lastly, it is to be remembered, that *above all things* we are to *put on charity;* the best motive, and the best rule, to those who communicate or defend religious truth. This will regulate our zeal, and animate our prudence. The teacher, who is sincerely affected to the welfare of the Christian society, and touched with a sense of the inestimable value of souls, for whom Christ died, will be able to say with the beloved disciple, *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.* That this end may effectually be promoted, we who teach or preach must, according to the doctrine of this discourse, have regard to the *mind* as well as to the *manners*, when we *form* the young or *reform* those of riper years, we must *begin* where we ought; and then we may expect the blessing of heaven upon our instructions: when we have rectified men's principles, these principles will rectify their morals; and so shall the *God of peace sanctify them wholly; that their whole spirit, and soul and body, may be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

SERMON XVI.

AND UPON THE EARTH DISTRESS OF NATIONS, WITH PERPLEXITY; THE SEA AND THE WAVES ROARING; MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR, AND FOR LOOKING AFTER THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMING UPON THE EARTH; FOR THE POWERS OF HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN. LUKE XXI. 25, 26.

THE authority of God's laws, and of his ministers, to keep a fallen world in order, and secure to the good and virtuous the blessings of peace, is one of the greatest and best gifts of an over-ruling Providence. But we have reason to fear, that, as the world degenerates, and Christian piety declines, this blessing will not be preserved to us.

There will always be difficulty in the language of a prophecy which foretels an event not yet come to pass: therefore I would not venture to decide hastily in a matter of some obscurity. But it seems highly probable, from the language of our Saviour in the text, that the last age of the world shall be troubled, in an unusual manner, with popular tumults and commotions; arising partly as the natural and necessary fruits of wild and novel opinions, and partly from the just judgment of God upon those who have forsaken him.

Before we consider critically the words of the text, we may judge what will happen before the destruction of the world, from what did actually happen on certain other occasions, which have been marked as prophetical of that event. Before the coming of the

Son of Man, it shall be as it was in the days before the flood—the earth was *filled with violence:* the word signifies *injustice, rapine,* and *robbery.* A state of *violence* is contrary to a state of *security;* for violence taketh away what government was ordained to secure. The heathen poet, describing the corrupt state of men before the flood, takes care not to omit this remarkable circumstance; telling us in his language, that *the fury of discord then prevailed far and wide over the world* *.

The city of Sodom was in a state of anarchy when it was destroyed. All the people, old and young, assembled themselves without restraint from every quarter, to commit acts of wickedness and violence. They mocked at all authority in others, and were judges and executioners in their own right.—*This one fellow* (said they) *came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them* †.

Before Jerusalem was destroyed, the fact is undoubted in history, that they were plagued with tumults and intestine commotions. The benefit of Government was lost amongst them; and troops of thieves and rioters, with self-commissioned leaders, plundered the city in a miserable manner, at their own discretion: till all were involved in one common catastrophe, when the place was stormed by the Romans.

From these cases the application is short and certain—As it was before the flood, as it was in Sodom, as it was in Jerusalem, so shall it be before the end of the world.

If we go now to the text, we find, from the con-

* Qua terra patet fera regnat Erynnis—Ovid. Met. i. 241.

† Gen. xix. 9.

text, that our Lord is there describing those signs which shall precede, not the destruction of Jerusalem, but his own glorious advent to judge the world. The words of the passage cannot with any propriety be confined to the people of a city or a nation: being evidently spoken of the *nations* of the Gentiles, and of the whole *habitable world* *.

Yet this application brings us into a difficulty: for if the nations of the world are intended, the distress here mentioned seems too partial in its kind to reach them. None but people on the sea coast can be terrified with the raging of the sea: on which consideration, some commentators have supposed that the distress here spoken of was meant of Galilee and of the sea of Tiberias. But this is out of all reason, when compared with the context: we are therefore compelled to take a method of interpreting, which will bring the language up to the occasion. The words of a prophecy seem to speak of one thing when another thing is intended; and that must be the case here. We know there is a sort of sea to be found in every inland country; the figurative sea of popular tumult and rebellious violence; much more terrible and destructive to the peace of mankind, than all the storms which agitate the ocean.

The poet and the prophet describe things rather by their properties and their effects, than by their vulgar names. Therefore the scripture compares the multitudes of the world to the waters of the sea; and the tumultuous rage of the people to the terrors of a storm. In the prophet Isaiah, the *abundance of the sea* † is put for the *forces of the Gentile* world, which should be turned to the church of Christ. In the same style,

* The words in the original are εθνων and οικεμενη.

† Isaiah lx. 5.

the harlot in the Revelation of St. John is said to *sit on many waters* *; as signifying the imperial power of heathenism which ruled over the Gentile world. And in a vision of Daniel, the four beasts, representing the four monarchies, rise out of a sea †, on which the four winds of heaven are all blowing at once; to signify, that they all arose from among the Heathens. Sometimes the text carries its own comment with it —Deliver me out of *great waters*, saith the Psalmist, from the hands of *strange children* ‡.

The waves of the sea, which lift up their heads, and assemble themselves farther than the eye can distinguish them, exhibit a grand image of an innumerable multitude of people; whom they resemble farther by the noise they make, whence the voice of a great multitude is compared to the voice of many waters. But, above all, the waves of the sea are most like to a multitude when tumult and disorder prevail amongst them. As the waters are then driven together, each wave that follows endeavouring to mount over that which is before, and all dashing against the shore, from whence they are beaten back into the sea by their own violence; such are the people, when they are assembled together without order or government. The turbulent passions of men are never to be restrained from breaking out into noise and confusion, but by that power which over-rules the waters of the sea. God is therefore celebrated for the one under a figure of the other: *thou stillest the raging of the sea and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people* §. When wild passions prevail amongst men, and there is no authority to keep them in awe, then society becomes what the sea is, when the winds are let loose upon it. There is then no more reason or

* Rev. xvii. 1. † Dan. vii. 2, 3. ‡ Psalm cxliv. 7. § Psalm lxv. 7.

judgment in the one than in the other: all is drowned with noise, and lost in the confusion of a storm. And herein we may view the difference between the power of government and the power of the people: for the power of government is ordained of God, and supported by his providence, to still that storm, and prevent that confusion, which the power of the people raises. The one is the only remedy against the other. The one is the gift of God to a nation that serveth him; the other is his curse upon the disobedient who are departed from him. And as there is not a sight more agreeable to the goodness of God, and the sense of all wise and good men, than a nation well appointed under good laws, and strict authority, and unanimous in exerting their strength under their lawful leader, for their common defence against their enemies: so is there not a spectacle upon earth more desirable to the devil, than the dissolution of law and authority, and the breaking of national power by the mercenary jarrings and contentions of opposite interests and factions. The disobedience which arises from civil dissension is a mother sin, which brings forth a brood of vipers. Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. And that this shall prevail more and more, and rise to a tremendous height in the last times, so as to unsettle the world, and keep men in a miserable state of fear and suspense, is not only to be expected from what the scripture hath intimated, but from the state and temper of the world in this respect; which it behoves us impartially to consider.

When the Reformation took place in Europe, many tares were sown among the good grain of that time; and one of the most pernicious was the claim of what is called *liberty*; a very good word, when taken in a

good sense; but used of old as a *cloak of maliciousness*, and always most affected by those who were themselves the *servants of corruption*. The thing recommended at first was *religious liberty;* and the notion stole into the hearts of men, because it seemed to be a necessary remedy against the odious abuses and encroachments of the church of Rome. However, even in this sense, fearful were the effects of it, when fanatics took it up, and acted in virtue of it, as their own wild imaginations directed; which is abundantly confirmed by the history of the Anabaptists in Germany, and such like people. But of late years, men have taken another monstrous stride; and, from asserting *religious* liberty, against the Pope, have gone on to claim a *natural* liberty, against all kings and rulers; with an equality of right in every man that is born to power and property. This they never could do as Christians, or men of common sense; so they have assumed the new name of *philosophers;* under which they set up a new religion of their own, with doctrines opposite in every article to those of Christianity.

The learning which is called classical is necessary to scholars, and hath many eminent uses; but the vain affectation of it is always dangerous. This it is which hath induced many amongst us to emulate the furious spirit which prevailed in heathen patriots; and to admire that most which was worst amongst them. They have little to say of the peace and splendour of the *Augustan* age, when men of greatest genius were loyalists; of the greatness of the empire under *Trajan;* its conversion under *Constantine;* its order and jurisprudence under *Justinian:* but their favourites are the savage *Brutus*, the sneaking *Vale-*

rius, the perfidious assassins of the great *Cæsar*; and such like saints of the true republican spirit.

The times of this world have shewn to us three sorts of people professing religion. 1. The believers and followers of God's revealed worship. 2. The practitioners of heathen idolatry. 3. The wise men of *Nature*, whose doctrines are many, and whose worship (if any) is from themselves. Of these three, the last are undoubtedly the worst. The Heathens, when they fell into idolatry, retained many traditionary notions, which were still near to the truth, and had some of its effects in civil society. But these last are utterly contrary to God and man; and their opinions will consequently produce more absurdity, and extravagance, and violence, than was ever seen in the world before. Their favourite doctrines seem to be these: that where government is concerned, man is born with a right to think and act as he pleases; that all authority in others is a dangerous imposition upon ourselves; and that the property of others belongs equally to us, if we can get it. To all which, there is not a thief in the precincts of the metropolis, who will not readily subscribe, and who, consequently, will not contribute his influence, and give his personal attendance, when a standard shall invite him, and give him an opportunity of putting his principles in practice.

We have all heard what terrible effects the false principles of the last century produced in this kingdom; and we have had a fearful specimen of the like, of very late years; which, with the blessing of Providence, and an exertion of the still remaining power of government, lasted but a few days.

In the British colonies of America, subjects who

were peaceable, happy, wealthy and prosperous, changed on a sudden into discontented insurgents. A wild spirit of independence prevailed; and, by the just judgment of God upon a profligate mother, and untutored children, succeeded; for a fatal precedent and encouragement to other wicked, discontented people. Much sooner than we could have expected hath the contagion spread itself to a neighbouring country; and what is very striking, and hath been generally noticed, the same person whom they employed against the peace of this government, is the leader in their own disturbances. Their situation, by all true accounts, hath been dreadful and lamentable; as that of every nation must be under the like circumstances. While the laws are in force, a man's house is his castle; and his life, and fortune, and character, are secured to him: but when a lawless multitude is afloat, the best members of society are at the mercy of the worst. Every man is a convict, when his enemy is his accuser, judge, and executioner. There are no rays of mercy from a throne to save the head of the unhappy victim from being made a spectacle upon a pole; no lawful force to protect his stores from being plundered, his lands laid waste, his buildings burned and demolished.

Now when we hear these things, what are we to think of them? We have teachers at home, who are glad of what hath happened; who inform us, that these are the efforts of freedom; that murders and massacres are among the sacrifices proper to such an occasion; *i. e.* due to the idol of liberty, that Moloch which must be worshipped with human sacrifices; and that they hope to see the same incendiary spirit extend itself to other peaceable countries of Europe: in other words, they hope to see *distress of nations with*

perplexity; encouraging the sea to rage, and the waves to roar and toss themselves, and exceed the just bounds which God hath appointed. If these evils should spread, and the like infatuation should prevail in other nations, the whole habitable world would be a theatre of desolation, a field of blood. The evils arising from such experiments are endless; the good to be expected from them is of a very equivocal nature; and the method of obtaining it is very unpromising. If the philosophical politican, from what we know of him already, were to model nations to his own wish, the world would be in a very vain, ignorant, corrupt, and, in many respects, a very miserable state. If all the jewels of imperial authority were thrown into the fire, nothing better than a calf would come out of it.

Popular tumult and division were the curse of the heathen world for many ages, when false liberty was become the object. The apostle St. Paul describes them *full of envy, murder, and debate* *: which was certainly the case with the republics of *Rome* and *Athens.* They were troubled with that proud, restless jealousy of power, which threw them into perpetual convulsions. To the abolition of kingly government they gave the specious name of *liberty,* and pronounced a state *free,* if it had no king: not considering that the many may be tyrants as well as a single person, and that nothing can make a people free but the exercise of such a power as restrains them from making *a prey of one another.* When the Romans put down their kings, they laid the foundation of a much greater and more extensive tyranny: and the celebrated orator of Rome, a professed admirer of republican government, lived to see such effects of

* Rom. i. 29.

it, as made him confess, in plain terms, that no king ever grasped at such tyrannical power as was effected by the popular magistrates of Rome *. The history of that people, for five hundred years, presents us with a scene of faction and disorder, proceeding from bad to worse, and degenerating into proscription, murder, and massacre; which he who sees and considers, will never believe that the republican form was given to any people for a *blessing*. And the delusion of mind they were all under, at the same time, is worth your observing. It is found, by experience, that the cry of liberty arises commonly from the thirst of power; and that the same spirit, which is outwardly patriotical, is inwardly tyrannical. So it happened with these. For while they dreaded power in their own magistrates, and were always providing against it, they held it by a supposed charter from heaven, that all other nations were made to be their slaves; and, instead of paying taxes from their own property, they were eating up the substance of other people, and filling their treasury with the money drained from conquered provinces, whom they kept tributary to themselves; or with the spoil and plunder seized from them in war. It was the declared object of these lovers of freedom, to make themselves the arbiters and proprietors of other men's liberties, and bring them under absolute subjection. It is boasted of by one of their own historians, with what

* Verbum mihi deest, Quirites, cum ego hanc potestatem *regiam* appello: sed profectò major est quædam. Cic. de Lege Agraria, Orat. II. § 14.—Renovabo illud quod initio dixi—*regnum* comparari, libertatem vestram funditus tolli. § 10.—They were using their interest for the establishment of a law, which would have put the lives and fortunes of the citizens, and the sale of the public lands, into their own absolute power for five years.

great labour, and how many bloody battles, they had brought *free nations to the Roman yoke, and taught them to be slaves* *. These are his very words.

The expedient to which the lower order had recourse for securing themselves from the oppression of the nobility, raised up that new set of tyrants, who were for ever troubling the state with some new sedition †, and for whom, according to the testimony of Cicero himself, the power of royalty was not great enough.

The providence of God used this hardy, warlike people as a scourge to other nations; and so they appear under a great and honourable character: but their own false principles produced such domestic misery, as did justice in every age upon their own pride and ambition. And thus, high as they were, they found a way of bringing themselves down to a level with the nations whom they despised as barbarians.

The case of this people is very remarkable, and, if considered, may give us some light into the ways of Providence. For when God was about to reform the world by the introduction of the Gospel, he restored imperial government at Rome, where it seemed impossible for it to take effect against the violent prejudices of the people. He opened their eyes to see the miserable fluctuations in their former government, and the very people, who had abhorred the idea of royalty, became so fond of it, that no Christian flatterers ever came up to them. In consequence of

* Liberas gentes, ideo impatientes *jugi*, multo labore, nec incruentis certaminibus, *servire docuerunt*. Flor. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 17.

† Seditionum omnium causas tribunitia potestas excitavit, quæ specie quidem plebis tuendæ, cujus in auxilium comparata est, re autem *dominationem* sibi acquirent. Ib. lib. iii. c. 13.

this wonderful work of Providence, the Gospel knows of no such government as a commonwealth. In the New Testament, *kings as supreme*, and those who were *sent by* kings, as the Roman governors of the time then were, are pointed out as the proper objects of civil obedience. But as the world draws toward its end, and God is about to destroy it, He, who turned commonwealths into kingdoms, may turn kingdoms into commonwealths; and that time may now be approaching.

I may be thought to overstrain the sense; but it is more agreeable to the context to suppose, that the *powers* of *heaven* which shall be *shaken*, signify the powers of government which shall be unsettled and removed from their old foundations. The powers in the natural heaven, the sun and the moon, which rule over the day and the night, are emblematical of empire and government upon earth*. And besides this, the Scripture admits of no *power* amongst men, but what is *given them from above:* and in that sense also is the *power of heaven*. This power has long been disregarded by some, while its existence is denied by others; and the object with all libertines is, to shake it, and cast it down, and shut it out of the world, and leave nothing but the power of the people; which, if it be taken for the *power of authority*, is a thing consistent neither with religion nor common sense.

We are fallen into times, when the doctrine of the

* Our late Bishop *Newton*, who was deeply versed in the language of prophecy, having quoted Isaiah, xiii. 9, 10, and Ezech. xxxii. 7, 8, and Joel ii. 30, 31, in order to illustrate this very passage concerning the *shaking of the powers of heaven*, observes very justly, "In "the prophetic language *great commotions and revolutions* upon earth "are often represented by commotions and changes in the heavens." *Dissert. on the Prophecies*, Vol. II. p. 305.

divine authority of government is received by the multitude with such pride, and impatience, and mockery, that it is plain their reason is disordered upon the subject. When their opinions prevail, and they are permitted to assume to themselves that power which belongeth only to God, no greater calamity can happen to any nation. This is the case at present with the people of a neighbouring country: and, surely, it is our duty to reflect upon that, as upon all the other ways of divine Providence. Some facts have been brought to pass, of late years, so extraordinary in themselves, and of such magnitude, that we may justly be alarmed. For the same principles which have disturbed others, and brought their present calamities upon them, are at work daily amongst ourselves. It is to be feared they were borrowed from us *; and if God, for the punishment of our manifold sins and corruptions, should suffer them to take effect here, they will put arms into the hands of all the disorderly people in the kingdom, and overturn our constitution in church and state; with such circumstances of *distress*, and *perplexity*, and terror, as can be conceived only by those who have been witnesses to such disorders.

* In the last century great danger arose to society from enthusiastic notions in religion. Of later years, a grand levelling hath been adopted, which tends to confound all right and property amongst mankind, and strikes at the authority of God himself in church and state. One of the first books, in which this was openly done, was called the *Rights of the Christian Church*. It undertook to prove that the Church is the creature of the state, and the state the creature of the people, and that God himself, as the governor of Israel, became such in virtue of a contract between himself and the people at Horeb. This precious piece was turned into French by *Le Clerc* and put into his *Bibliotheque Choisie*, which went over Europe, and probably sowed some of those thistles, which are now springing up and threaten to overspread the face of the earth.

From the prospect of things presented to us in the text, I beg leave humbly to suggest, in few words, how Christians ought to conduct themselves under such circumstances.

We, who teach, though in times that are bad, and daily altering for the worse, should never be ashamed of our true principles, nor weary of warning the people against the delusion of such as are false. If we should be opposed by those who treat us with scorn and contempt, for speaking as our duty requires, we should neither wonder nor be troubled at it, but consider their insolence as a part of their distemper. Their opinion is of no more weight when they extol *what they call liberty*, than when they deny Christianity: and we commonly find a strong propensity to do both, in the same person. Some assert their freedom against God's institution of marriage; some against his institution of government: all promise themselves happiness in so doing; but all find servitude and corruption. This we should endeavour to make the people aware of, and admonish them still to *pray for kings and for all that are in authority*, as Christians did of old, and as the Church of England directs us to do now; that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We are farther to insist, that God is fearful and just in his judgments; that he abases those who exalt themselves; that he violently takes away honours and riches, when they are abused to the purposes of luxury and impiety; that he lets the wild boar of the wood into the vineyard of his church, to trample it down and lay it waste, when its fruits are become sour, and unprofitable; that men should

therefore so live as to secure to themselves the protection of God, and be able to look up to him with confidence in the day of *distress* and *perplexity*. Whatever changes may take place here below, God is still the same. The Psalmist describes him as seated securely on high, upon the throne of his kingdom: while the people, like the restless waves of the sea, are vainly raging below: *Ever since the world began hath thy seat been prepared—The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier.* Psalm xciii. *Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.* This world must come to its end: we should therefore not be dismayed at the *signs*, which make it probable that its end may be drawing near. For why? The same sea, which destroyed the wicked Egyptians, gave deliverance to the chosen people of God. We should have no desire to put off the end of this world; but should rather pray, as we are taught to do in the most solemn of our offices, that God would *shortly accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom;* that saints and martyrs, and all who have, and do suffer for the cause of God and the name of Jesus Christ, may lift up their heads, and see their Deliverer seated upon the clouds of heaven.

Till this shall be brought to pass, let us not set our affections on the pleasures of this unsteady world, so apt to disturb and alarm us with the misery of present, and the terror of future evils. Woe be unto those, who have not God for their confidence in the day of visitation!—*Watch ye therefore, and pray*

always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man—To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all power and dominion, in heaven and earth, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

YE OUGHT TO SUPPORT THE WEAK, AND TO REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, HOW HE SAID, IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE. ACTS XX. 35.

Children of this world, and *children of light,* are phrases of the Scripture, by which two opposite parties of men are distinguished; and it is a considerable step toward the Christian life, to understand rightly their different principles and rules of action. A general character of each, so far as our present subject is concerned with them, may be given in few words. The *children of this world* are they who study how to turn men's labours and passions and prejudices to their own advantage; and their chief wisdom consists in making other men useful to themselves. The *children of light,* having higher objects in view, think it their wisdom as well as their happiness to make themselves useful to all mankind. It never could be expected that the former would pay much regard to the memorable saying in the text; therefore it is addressed to the latter; to Christians, who are glad to hear, and ready to follow, *the words of the Lord Jesus.* He, whose first object it is, to get as much as he can, by any means whatsoever, will find little inclination to give; especially on a religious motive; for the sake of a prospect which he

could never see: but he, whose faith has taught him that he may be a gainer by his losses, will readily admit that he may be blessed for his gifts. From this great difference in their opinions, the man of the world despises the Christian; while the Christian pities the man of the world, and understands him much better than he understands himself.

Our blessed Saviour was the great example of his own sublime doctrine. He came into the world, not to receive, but to give. He refused its wealth, its honour, and its power: he gave bread to the hungry, comfort to the afflicted, health to the sick, life to the dead: he gave himself for our redemption, and ascended up on high, that he might send down his gifts upon earth: he is now daily giving to those that ask, and has promised to assist his church with his gifts to the end of the world.

We have another eminent example of this doctrine in the person of St. Paul: "I have coveted (said he) "no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, you your-"selves know, that these hands have ministered unto "my necessities, and to them that were with me."

This duty of *ministering* to the *necessities* of *them that are with us*, our fellow-christians, friends, relations and associates in the work of the Gospel, is the subject we have before us on the present occasion: you will therefore permit me to recommend it to your attention from the words of the text; which teach us,

First, that we *ought to support the weak.*

Secondly, that we are encouraged so to do, from the consideration, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

That the strong ought to support the weak, is in a manner self-evident from the state of mankind; who

being by nature endued with unequal powers, are formed into societies for their mutual assistance and protection, as the superior and the subordinate members are set together in the same body. And if God has made all men for one another, as the constitution of things plainly indicates, the world, wicked as it is, can present us with no vice more unnatural and detestable than selfishness. For what could any one amongst us have done, unless the Creator in his mercy had provided those, whose duty and pleasure it was to support us when we had no help in ourselves? We bring into life no faculty but that of signifying our wants; and the cries of an infant find a ready way to the heart of a parent. In our first years, the attendance of the mother is necessary; without which the tender plant must fade and perish: and the father is called upon for support and education till the years of manhood. Every child comes forward in the world under an obligation to repay the debt of gratitude upon other objects with some of that same kindness, without which he himself must have been lost: and the sordid wretch, who can gratify and indulge himself without any sense of this obligation, should have been left upon a common, there to cry to the winds and the elements, which have no sense of human weakness. "Be kind to "strangers," said the Law, "for *ye were once strangers* "*in Egypt**;" so may the moralist say, with parity of reason, *support the weak*, for ye were once weak as they are.

In virtue of this argument, the first debt is due to parents and all relations; but it extends to all mankind. Want and weakness, wherever they are found, carry their own recommendation to a benevo-

* Deut. x. 19.

lent mind. And we must not be too strict in enquiring after the causes of them. They may be the effects of vice and folly; yet sinners have a claim upon sinners; and if they stand in need of admonition, no man has so just a title to reprove and amend the follies of another, as he that relieves his wants. If God were extreme to examine into the claims of all those who apply to his mercy, how few would be fit to say their prayers! The most proper objects for the exercise of true benevolence are those who have it not in their power to make any return: perhaps they will never have it in their inclination; yet the Father of mercy, who is to be our pattern, extends his goodness to the *unthankful and to the evil, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust.*

When we consider ourselves as Christians, every page of the New Testament will suggest some additional obligation to the practice of this duty. There we are instructed, that *no man liveth to himself*; that neither our effects nor our persons are at our own disposal; that we have nothing but what we receive; that we are all related in Christ Jesus, as members of the same mystical body, animated by the same Spirit, and called to the same faith and hope: that we have the same friends and the same enemies. On which considerations, the Christian Society, in the purest ages of the Church, subsisted as one family upon a common stock. No man said *that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they, who had houses or lands, sold them,* and a fund was raised, out of which *distribution was made unto every man according as he had need**. This charitable mode of allotting

* Acts iv. 32, &c.

to him that lacked the superfluities of him that abounded, was suggested to the people of God by the distribution of the manna in the wilderness: of which he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; every man had a supply according to his wants. We are not to suppose that Christians are to surrender their whole substance now as at first: our present circumstances seem to render that impracticable: but this we are never to forget, that God permits, we may say, ordains, inequality of possession, that the piety of his servants may correct it by an equality of distribution. And the opportunity will never be wanting. Poverty shall never cease; distress shall never have an end; and tears shall flow for the merciful to wipe them away, till God shall take that office upon himself: and when there shall be no more sin, there will be no more sorrow.

Hence we infer, that the abundance of one man above another is no effect of chance, nor of any partial intention in Divine Providence; it must be so; and he who wishes to see men in a state of equality, wishes to see them more like the beasts, who are incapable of considering each other's wants, and are rather taught by their instinct to chace away every poor stranger as an intruder: but by man, superior property is held in trust; whence every rich man will have an account to render as an overseer of the poor upon his own stock; and if any should be found to have perished for want of the relief which he might and ought to have bestowed, but did not, justice will one day have a claim upon him, which no money can satisfy: and many a poor man will have reason to thank God he was not that rich man.

If possession were absolute, it would follow, that

God is a respecter of persons: and they who think it or wish it so, are under a very unhappy mistake. Their idea of enjoyment is false and abject; it is contradictory to the noblest affections of the soul, and the truest notions of greatness, as well as to that memorable sentence of our Lord, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* A generous mind never enjoys its possessions so much as when others are made partakers of them. In this, man is enabled most nearly to resemble God; who gives all things to all, but can receive nothing from any. Yet in one case, when we give to the poor for his sake, he is pleased to take it to himself: *inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my poor brethren,* saith our blessed Saviour, *ye did it unto me.* If there is a way of *lending unto the Lord,* as the Scripture hath expressed it*, he above all men must be blessed, to whom the proprietor of heaven and earth is a debtor. Hence it appears that what is given is not lost, as an usurer would reckon; it is more properly our own than it was before. It is as seed sown in the earth, which returns to the sower with an abundant increase. What is *received* is as the corn we bestow upon ourselves; it is eaten, and perishes. What is *given,* is as corn cast into the earth, which cometh to us again at the harvest.

There is no better encouragement to an active and busy life, than this one consideration, that it puts us into a capacity of having more to spare for the wants of others. Industry on this principle, is the first social duty, because it leads to the greatest, which is charity. *Ye yourselves know,* said the great Apostle, *that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them which were with me.* Blessed is he whose labours

* Prov. xix. 17.

have furnished him with something to give! But what must he do who is idle? Where is his blessing? He can give nothing, for he has nothing: he must live upon other men's labours; which is a mean and servile condition. There ought therefore to be a curse upon idleness; he, who does no good, should receive none. And if we look to the dispositions of men, we shall generally find, that the slothful are never easy in any situation, but always complaining and discontented; neglecting their own affairs, and troubling themselves to no purpose with fretful remarks upon the concerns of other people; while the busy are vigorous and cheerful, neither provoked with the follies of private life, nor foreboding visionary evils from the administration of the state. Upon the whole, there is not a more contemptible being in the creation than an idle man: which leads us to make a comparison between the honour of giving, and that of receiving. The givers are the rich, the honourable, the merciful, the devout, and the industrious; the receivers are the poor, the sick, and the needy; to whom we may add, the covetous, the idle, and the useless: Therefore, if the givers are better than the receivers, it is on this account also, *more blessed to give than to receive.*

Here we are to lament, that the possession of wealth, while it confers the ability of doing good, too often takes away the inclination. In some it foments an effeminate principle of self-indulgence; in others a sort of churlish pride, which hardens the mind, and shuts up the heart instead of opening the hand. Married persons, who have no children, and with whom wealth is more easily accumulated, are frequently observed to be more attentive to their economy than those who have large families; and age is

more avaricious than youth, because it is generally richer.

If all men were rational, he that becomes rich would congratulate himself in some such words as these: "Now I am happy, in that I have a farther opportunity of doing good unto others; for this is the honour and the pleasure of man." He that becomes old as well as rich, would be ready to say within himself, "Man wants but little, and I shall want that little but for a short time: while I have the opportunity which I am shortly to lose, let me *do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith.*" Thus would men reason if they reasoned right: and thus they will reason, when true religion hath shewed them the brevity and vanity of life, the claims of their fellow creatures and fellow Christians, the uncertainty of possession, the certainty of retribution in a better state, where it shall at last be *blessed to receive.* Nothing shall be given, nothing will be wanted: all shall receive of the fulness of God: the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, shall be replenished together: they who have been able to do good shall be happy to find that its reward is eternal; and they who have suffered want and weakness shall triumph that the evil days are to return no more.

I am now to entreat your attention, while I apply some of the past doctrine to the occasion of our present meeting, for the support of the widows and orphans of deceased clergymen; a noble and pious institution, which does honour to those who promote it, whether of the clergy or laity, and will, we trust, give them a title to the blessedness in the text.

Some say the clergy think of nothing but *receiving*, and are more attentive to their worldly profits than

all other men. But from whom do such censures come? Generally either from those who have a sordid interest in defrauding them of their dues; or from those who wish there were no clergy, because they wish there were no religion. Uncharitable and ill-disposed minds endeavour to cover their own atheistical disaffection to the service of God with the faults and weaknesses of the clergy, whether real or imaginary. But if such an accusation is brought against the clergy in general, it is not true. The institution and support of charitable societies by the clergy themselves in almost every diocese of this province, for the benefit of their poorer brethren and their posterity, is a sign that they have views beyond their own present advantage. Consider them at large as an order of men, or profession, and it will be found that they are as little guilty of coveting other men's goods, and making a property of their neighbours, as any order of men whatsoever. For it may justly be said of them, that they expect nothing but what is their own. The tithes or tenths allotted for their support, were freely granted on a religious principle by the crown, with the consent of the Lords and Commons of the realm, in the Saxon times, when the king was proprietor of all the lands in the kingdom; and the charter is still extant in our ancient historians *. They were not purchased by any owner, nor are they paid for by any occupier of the land; if they were, the rents would be at least one seventh part higher than they now are. The tenant only surrenders what the land has been charged with for nine hundred and twenty-seven years; and so little

* See *Monast. Angl.* Vol. I. p. 100, and *Collier's* Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 156, &c.

can be laid to the account of the clergy for exacting it with rigour, that I believe there are few amongst them, who will not readily acquiesce in the terms made for themselves by the neighbouring lay-impropriators. It is hard upon them, that in some instances, where the tenths have been surrendered peaceably to laymen, confederacies have been formed and illegal assemblies convened, to prevent the taking of the tenths in kind by clergymen.

As this evil arises only from the corruption of the times, the reformation of the times would be the natural and the best remedy. To change the tenure of clergymen's property, may be found the worst remedy of all; for their present tenure as owners of tithes is wiser and safer, more agreeable to the laws of God, to the practice of all ages and all religions, Patriarchal, Jewish, Heathen and Christian; and consequently better with all its inconveniences than it could possibly be in any other form, or on any other authority than that of their ancient charter: and for those inconveniences, time may bring forth some remedy which we cannot now foresee.

I am very sensible, the mode of receiving tenths was once more agreeable than at present. There was a time when the people *dedicated their tithes with gladness* *, and made their offerings on a principle of devotion; as knowing that God is not an indifferent spectator of what passes in his church; that he could either send a blessing upon their fruits, according to his promise †, or punish their fraud and sacrilege with a temporal curse upon their affairs. This was once the persuasion of the people of England; and then there was a more general good understanding and mutual affection between the minister

* Ecclus. xxxv. 9. † See Mal. iii. 10.

and his congregation. Now it is too much the fashion to leave Providence out of the question; and to consider tithes and offerings, merely as dues settled by law, which a man may lessen as much as he can, and oppress his minister with as low and unjust an agreement as possible: by the prevalence of which cruel policy, many of the clergy are struggling to maintain themselves and their families on less than two thirds of their just profits: and this under the increasing burthen of rates and taxes. If a clergyman thus oppressed, endeavours to do himself justice, a confederacy is formed to distress him: the hearts of his people are alienated; separate interests take place, where there ought to be but one; his labours are no longer successful; his time and thoughts, which should be dedicated to the good of his flock, are unhappily taken up in maintaining a dispute against them: his peace of mind is destroyed, and his life in some cases rendered so uncomfortable, that many a tender hearted man must have sunk under the trial with vexation and disappointment.

The clergy may have their faults, their errors, and their corruptions, like other classes of men; God grant we may lament and reform them! but here the fault is not in them; because no clergyman can take more than his right: the fault is in those who would compel him to take less. When the law has been applied to by clergymen for the recovery of their dues, this has rarely happened but when it was absolutely necessary; and it has been reported, that out of seven hundred suits upon record, six hundred of them have been carried by the clergy: which fact is sufficient to shew, that, whatever may be said against individuals, clergymen in general have been neither covetous nor litigious.

There is a sort of oppression long established, under which the clergy have suffered. The reformation, which took from Papists what the Pope had unjustly alienated from parochial rectors, restored little of it to the reformed ministers. It was mostly granted out to those of the laity who were early enough in their applications, and they hold it to this day. Many clergymen have a very scanty maintenance, and in some cases, it is to be feared, a very mean dependence upon lay patrons, who are rectors of parishes, and receive the tithes once due to the ministers. They were taken from those who were said to do little; but the matter surely was not mended, when they were given to those who did nothing.

To this grand abuse many others may be added, when we are recounting the hardships of the clergy; such as the establishment of inadequate compensations, the payment of antiquated sums in their nominal value, and such like. In short, too many advantages, which times and occasions would encourage the powerful and the avaricious to take against the clergy, have been taken against them; and if not with the malice of *Julian*, who plundered Christians that they might pursue their road to heaven with fewer incumbrances, yet certainly with too great an attention to worldly interest, and too little attention to the honour of God, the success of his gospel, and the just rights of his church; which depended upon God before it depended upon men; and cannot be rendered independent of him by all the power and policy of the world.

It is a farther misfortune upon the families of clergymen, that the profits of their office do not bear a proportion like those of other men to the labours of it.

The physician who visits more patients raises a fortune sooner than he who visits fewer: the pleader at the bar who does most business comes soonest to wealth and honour. This is not the case with the pleader in the pulpit: his attention to the welfare of men's souls adds nothing to the established profits of his ministry: and in many large and populous parishes, where the minister has most duty, there is nothing but a residuary vicarial revenue to support it; and that perhaps to be collected by small sums, with trouble and uncertainty: so that the advantage is least where the labour is greatest. And after the discouragements of his life, the clergyman at his death leaves no such profession as can be carried on by a surviving widow for the maintenance of the family; who are left in poverty, with a quick and afflicting sense of their misfortunes, from the advantage (or rather disadvantage) of superior sentiments and a refined education.

All these considerations recommend to your encouragement the charity * of this day; which, we trust, hath the good wishes, and will continue to receive the assistance of those who are here present.

But since no human institution can prosper without the Divine blessing; we who are of the clergy

* To give this charity a better effect, it was found expedient, that a particular attention should be had to the education of the poor orphans of clergymen, till they are of age to be placed out in the world. A charitable society was accordingly formed for this good purpose in the year 1749, the *Constitutions* of which (being annually printed and distributed) do so fully explain the design, and prove the advantages, of this *New Charity*, that I must beg leave to recommend the little pamphlet which contains them to the consideration of those who are charitably disposed; under a persuasion, that this state of the case will speak for itself, and induce them to encourage so excellent an institution.

must secure that blessing, and engage the protection of heaven, by approving ourselves as faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; that through our labours, our families and posterity may have a claim of relationship and dependence on the Divine Providence to the end of the world.

My station in the church gives me no right to use a style of authority; and if it did, I hope I should be tender in my reflections, through a consciousness of my own defects. But I must mention one great danger to which even serious men are now exposed in the discharge of their ministry. It arises from the scandal which has been brought upon our religion by hypocrisy in some, and enthusiasm in others. This makes us shy of appearing active in our duty, through a childish fear, lest they who never will do right should think we are doing wrong. The people who call themselves *the world* can forgive a man any thing sooner than the appearance of much religion: and in an age when counterfeits are abroad, they censure with a shew of prudence and authority: their opinion becomes popular; and falsehood, when popular, never fails to domineer; it produces insolence on one side, and servility on the other. In every community, the vicious and the indolent will, if they can, make themselves a rule to all the rest; no coin must be current without their image and superscription. The man who gives praise to that truth or that virtue which reflects dishonour upon himself, must be blessed with a degree of liberality rarely to be met with. Sobriety must therefore never expect the good word of drunkenness; profligacy will always contemn prudence; profaneness will mock at piety; and they who have much religion must now meet the danger of being cast out as counterfeits by those who have little. If

they are in the church, and shew any extraordinary attention to the work of the ministry, they will incur the suspicion of being under some mistake: some root of error will be supposed to animate them; as if false doctrine alone could inspire a zeal for the glory of God. But has the plan of Redemption no value; has the goodness of God no influence; has the eloquence of Revelation no power, but with indiscreet minds and disordered imaginations? Heaven forbid that we should harbour so injurious a sentiment, which reflects dishonour upon God and man! If hypocritical sanctity in some, and enthusiastic doctrine in others, have brought Christian zeal into disrepute, this will indeed be a snare to those who lay too great a stress upon the approbation of the world. But we may steer through all these difficulties, by attending to the example of the church here, and committing ourselves to the judgment of God hereafter. Thus we shall be secured from the wildness of imagination, and from that dishonourable fear, which would hinder us from being of any use as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Every clergyman has his way marked out for him in the Articles and Homilies of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND; a church which has hitherto been a faithful witness to all necessary truth; grounding her belief on the scripture and the practice of the purest ages. Her sober doctrines will secure us from the flights of fancy, and the vanity of innovation. Thus, however active and busy, we shall still be true and orderly sons of the church; and if we do not give satisfaction under that character, no blame will lie upon our consciences; let those look to it who do not accept of us.

To secure ourselves against the prevailing influence

of fashion, so formidable to the children of this world, we must consider ourselves as stewards of God, to whom alone we shall be accountable at last. If he shall approve of us, it will not be worth our while to enquire who hath condemned us. The breath of censure, and the blast of fame, are temporary and transient: the distinctions which now make so much noise, the parties which disturb the world, and divide the hearts of men, shall soon be at an end. Infidelity and indevotion shall meet the infamy they deserve, and truth shall once more be held in honour. Which God of his infinite mercy grant in his good time, for the merits of Jesus Christ; *to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is ever due, all honour, glory, praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore.* Amen.

END OF VOL. III.

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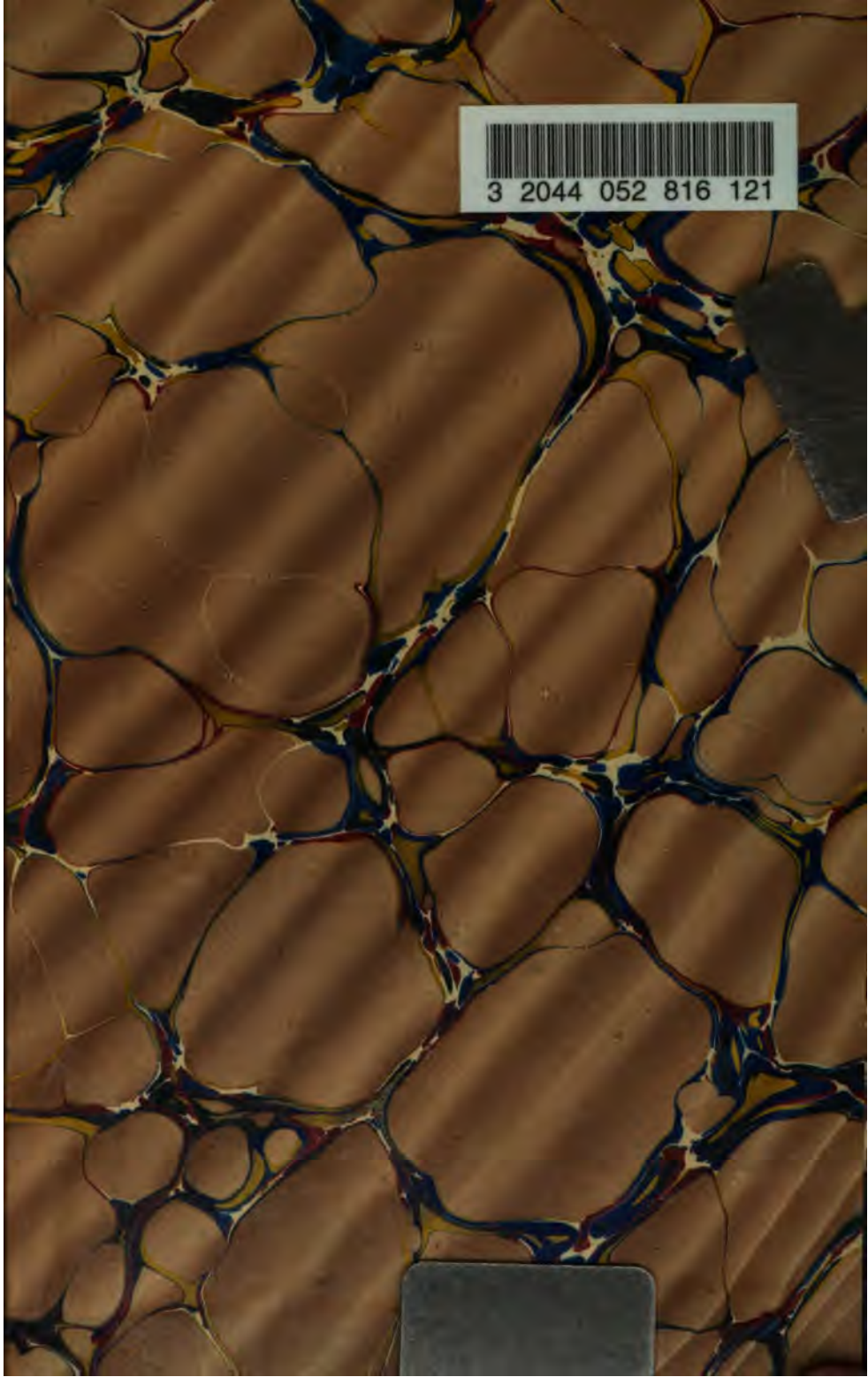
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